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# DISCOURSES

UPON THE

# CONFESSION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

LONDON:
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# THE CONFESSION

OF THE

# CHURCH OF ENGLAND

PRACTICALLY ELUCIDATED

IN SEVEN DISCOURSES, PREACHED, DURING THE SEASON OF LENT,

AT THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, CANTERBURY.

BY

THOMAS BARTLETT, A.M.,

RECTOR OF KINGSTONE.

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Παρ' ἡμιν, ὁ λαος επι τον οικον της προσευχης, και εν πονῳ, και εν θλιψει, και εν συνοχη δακρυων εξομολογουμενοι τω Θεω.—St. Basil, Ep. 63.

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THE MINISTER AND CONGREGATION

OF THE

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THESE DISCOURSES,

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# ADVERTISEMENT.

HAD the writer of the following Discourses anticipated, as he was preparing them for delivery from the pulpit, that they would subsequently appear in a more permanent shape, some of the topics contained in them would probably have been discussed in a different manner. As it is, however, he deems it his duty, in obeying the requisition made for their publication, to commend them to the candour of his readers in the exact form in which they were preached, and

without the addition or subtraction of a single sentiment, and scarcely, as he believes, of a single expression. And, if it shall please God to render them instrumental in awakening reflection, or in deepening the serious impressions which may already exist, in the mind of any one who may peruse them, he will enjoy the consolation of not having laboured in vain.

*Kingstone Rectory,*
*April* 17, 1828.

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# DISCOURSES, &c.

## DISCOURSE I.

ISAIAH LIII. 6.

*All we like sheep have gone astray—we have turned every one to his own way.*

As the season of Lent invites us to the exercise of humiliation and self-abasement, I cannot, perhaps, more profitably employ this solemn and interesting period, than by directing your attention to the CONFESSION of our church, and endeavouring to point out to those, who, from Sabbath to Sabbath, address their Maker, agreeably to the form of this

confession, both what it acknowledges, and what it professes to seek, at a throne of grace. The most important and edifying part of divine worship is *prayer*, and one of the most solemn, and interesting, parts of prayer, is *confession*. On this account, the Church of England, very properly, places her confession nearly at the commencement of the public service. In this arrangement of her daily offices, as we learn from the books of Ezra and Daniel,[1] the example of devout men, who lived under the Mosaic dispensation, is imitated, as well as the practice of the purer ages of the Christian church. "With us," says St. Basil, the Bishop of Cæsarea, "all the people come early in the morning, while it is yet dark, to the house of prayer, and with sorrow, and with affliction, and with profusion of tears, make confession of their sins to God."[2]

[1] Ezra, ix. 5, &c.; and Daniel, ix. 3, &c.

[2] Epistle 63.

It is, moreover, directed by the rubric, that the confession should be repeated after the minister by the whole congregation; and, that this was also the practice of the primitive church, we may learn from the testimony of the primitive bishop already cited: — "All, as it were, with one voice, and one heart, make their confession unto the Lord, each man expressing his own repentance with his own mouth."[3] The language of the beautiful, and comprehensive form of confession, adopted by our own church, is deeply humiliating to human pride and self-dependence, and is therefore admirably adapted to the condition, and character, of us miserable offenders. It may be remarked of humiliation, that it not only constitutes a part, but pervades the whole of a sinner's religion. No proud thought, no lofty imagination, no self-righteous feeling, can consist with

[3] Epistle 63.—*St. Basil.*

the holy doctrines of Jesus. In these the Saviour is exhibited as every thing, the sinner as nothing: Christ is exalted, the creature is abased. In perfect unison with this view of the subject, our *confession* is composed of TWO GENERAL PARTS, or DIVISIONS: the one contains an *acknowledgment of our delinquencies*, the other consists of *petitions for pardon and grace*. And under the former general part, or division, we find,—

I. A CONFESSION of OUR DEPARTURE FROM GOD.

II. Of THE DEPRAVITY OF THE HEART.

III. Of OUR ACTUAL TRANSGRESSIONS.

IV. Of OUR UTTER HELPLESSNESS.

Under the latter general part, or division, we find,—

I. A PETITION FOR FORBEARANCE, AND MERCY.

II. For restoration through Christ.

III. For grace, whereby we may glorify God in our lives.

These seven leading topics will embrace the whole range of matter embodied in our confession; and they will form, in their natural order, the subjects of the various discourses, to which I shall beg to direct your serious attention.

And may He, without whom nothing is strong, and nothing holy, pour down, upon all who assemble here, a large measure of his blessed Spirit, that they who minister in holy things may faithfully dispense the word of truth, and that they who hear it may meekly receive the same, to the comfort and edification of their souls!

To the first clause of the first general division of the confession, then, I

am, on the present occasion, to direct your notice: — "Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep."

These words make known, I. *The character under which we should approach God.* They contain, II. *An acknowledgment of our actual departure from him.* And the consideration of these topics will supply US, IN CONCLUSION, *with some important and salutary lessons.*

FIRST, then, the character under which we are to approach God is, that of an "Almighty and all-merciful Father."

Power and mercy are the necessary attributes of a sinner's God—the one to fill us with fear and holy reverence, the other to draw us with the cords of love, and constrain us by the endearing ties of gratitude and duty; while, the united view of both attributes, is well calculated to lead men to repentance, to stir up feelings of contrition in the soul, and to

excite in the mind an earnest desire to be restored to the favour of him, from whom our iniquities have separated us.

1. Jehovah is indeed, all-powerful. "For lo," says the prophet, "he that formeth the mountains, and created the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought—that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name!"[4] "Thine, O Lord," says David, "is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty, for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is thine! Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all."[5] It is the power of Jehovah which changes the heart of the sinner, subdues his stubborn and perverse will, and transforms him, from

[4] Amos iv. 13. [5] 1 Chron. xxix. 11 and 12.

a rebel and a traitor, into a meek, submissive, and obedient child.[6]

2. The Lord God also is indeed "most merciful." He is the common parent of all, and "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."[7] He is the common benefactor of all, "making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good,"—dispensing his favours with a liberal hand, not according to our deserts, but according to the abundance of his own loving-kindness; for "the Lord," says the Psalmist, "is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works." And if the mercy of Jehovah be conspicuous as the Parent, and Benefactor of mankind, —as he who formed and preserves, who feeds, and clothes, and guards, and blesses us—how resplendently does this attribute shine in the circle of divine perfections, when exhibited in the character of Saviour of sinners, and Re-

[6] *Vide* Ephes. i. 17—21. [7] Psalm ciii. 13.

deemer of the world! The strongest expressions become feeble when applied to that miracle of grace and compassion, which is comprehended in the simple statement of the evangelist, that, Jesus "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."[8] It was well remarked, by a learned writer of the last century, in allusion to the character in which we approach God in our confession—"Of all fathers he is the most merciful. His omnipotence will teach us humility and contrition: his infinite goodness will inspire us with faith and hope. If the terrors of the Almighty affright us, and seal up our lips, the contemplation of his mercy and paternal pity will open them again; and the united sense of these two perfections will dispose us to make a sincere confession, and prevailing supplication, at the throne of grace."[9]

[8] Rev. i. 5.

[9] Shepherd's Critical and Practical Elucidation of the Book of Common Prayer.

But the clause before us, SECONDLY, contains, *An acknowledgment of our actual departure from God.* "We have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep."

1. The image of a lost sheep, most simply and strikingly represents the wandering of a sinner from God, and the consequent misery and danger to which such wandering leads. Of all gregarious animals, none are so apt to stray as the sheep; when it does stray, from its weakness and timidity, none are exposed to greater dangers; when at a distance from the fold, it possesses, less than other animals, the instinctive quality which enables it to return; the probability therefore is, that a sheep, which had once passed over the limits assigned it, would continue to stray, and finally be lost, were not the shepherd's eye upon it, and did he not seek it out and bring it back.

There is a fold abundantly supplied,

and vigilantly guarded, where we might be safe, but we have wandered from it: there is a Shepherd, who would feed, and protect, and tenderly provide for us, but we have "erred and strayed" from him. Heedless of his steps, and regardless of his voice, we have often forsaken "the green pastures and the still waters," and have wandered into the dry and barren wilderness, where we have been left destitute of true comfort, and have been exposed to innumerable perils. Having departed from the Shepherd of his soul, the trangressor becomes entangled amidst the thorns of worldly cares, and seduced by the ensnaring attractions of worldly pleasures. He possesses neither strength to contend with his enemies, nor power to flee from them; forgetting whence he is fallen, and ignorant how to return, he would continue to wander until he was "lost for ever," did not Christ, the good Shepherd, who "laid down his life for the

sheep," restore him from his wanderings, and reconduct him along the path of humiliation, and repentance, and shame, to the fold from whence he strayed.[10] And how numerous, and how broad are the paths which attract the wanderer from the fold; and what multitudes have trodden them, until they found the end to be destruction!

Many run into the practice of open vices, as swearing, sabbath-breaking, intemperance, uncleanness, dishonesty; vices which hurry them, with an accelerated step, into the gulf of perdition! Many, again, have their hearts drawn away after covetousness, forgetting, that "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase."[11] In one direction, may multitudes be seen running after shadows, and pursuing empty phantoms, until they are taught, by dear-bought experience, that "all is vanity,

[10] *Vide* Shepherd. [11] Eccles. v. 10.

and vexation of spirit."[12] In another direction, the pride of human reason, and the unsanctified acquirements of mere earthly science, draw off the mind from God, and by encouraging self-dependence and presumption, not unfrequently issue in infidelity. But however various and dissimilar, the paths which attract the steps of the transgressor, they all have one termination—they all converge to one point—they lead to destruction—"the end thereof is death!"[13]

What, then, are some of the important and salutary lessons, which the first clause of our confession teaches us?

I. It clearly and strongly points out *our natural condition*. We are all, by nature, fallen—undone—lost! We love not the fold of God; we are wanderers from that fold from our birth; as the text declares, "all we like sheep have

[12] Eccles. i. 14. [13] Prov. xvi. 25.

gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way."

II. The character of our *actual departure from God* is also made known.

Although the grace of the Saviour may, in some measure, have recovered us from our natural proneness to wander, yet how unstable have we been! Where is the day, or the hour, in which our soul has not "started aside, as it were, like a broken bow?"[14] "Where is he that liveth, and sinneth not?" Is there the consciousness of some particular sin, pressing upon the mind of any one present? Go and confess it to the Lord—tell it out with sorrow in the ears of the good Physician—bewail it, and mourn over it, that the precious blood of Christ may heal your wounds. "For if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."[15]

[14] Psalm lxxviii. 58. [15] 1 John i. 9.

Does the remembrance of the omission of any duty weigh heavily upon your soul? Conceal it not from your heavenly Father—attempt not to hide that which his eye has already noticed, but meekly humble yourselves before him—implore forgiveness for your past offences, as well as divine grace and strength, that you may be preserved, more steadfast in your course, in time to come. And if the Lord, in his mercy, shall lift up the light of his reconciled countenance upon you; if he shall restore you from your backslidings, and freely forgive your wanderings, do not, on this account, acquit and forgive yourselves. Never cease to bewail your corruptions—never cease to be deeply abased on account of your departure from God. The prayer of David, when convinced of his transgression, was—"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my trans-

gressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."[16]

III. We may learn, moreover, *our habitual proneness to wander from God.*

There are certain maladies which attach to particular constitutions, and which frequently break out upon the body, notwithstanding the greatest care and attention, on the part of the patient to prevent it. Now, sin in the soul, is what these diseases are in the body, except that, instead of existing in particular constitutions only, it has insinuated itself into all—it pervades all—it has corrupted and contaminated all. For, from this most fearful of maladies none are exempt; it is mingled with our very nature; it clings to us in every stage of

[16] Psalm li. 1—4.

our existence; it descends with us to the tomb! The seat of this distemper is the soul, and it shows its baneful influence over the corporeal frame, by making the members of the body "instruments of unrighteousness."

The prophet's lamentation over Judah, strikingly paints our spiritual malady. "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores."[17] This is an illustration of the disease itself, as it exists in the soul of every child of Adam. Let us notice the manner, in which an inspired apostle speaks of its moral actings, or its effects upon the conduct. "They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the

[17] Isaiah i. 5 & 6.

poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is filled with cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known; their is no fear of God before their eyes!"[18]

Plain and faithful statements of the doctrine of human depravity, oftentimes offend the unregenerate man; because, a lofty imagination, and a proud heart, do not like to be robbed of their assumed importance and self-dependence. This grand and fundamental doctrine, however, is as distinctly recognized, and as strongly set forth, in the various formularies of our church, as it is clearly exhibited, and forcibly urged, in the pages of holy writ. Both concur in their solemn and repeated testimony, that "we have erred and strayed from the ways of God like lost sheep;" that we "have turned every one to his own way."

[18] Rom. iii. 12 and following verses.

The language of the second homily, upon our Lord's Passion, is peculiarly strong upon this subject: and although some of the expressions employed may, perhaps, offend a fastidious taste, or distress the refinement of a modern ear, we must not forget, that, they are the recorded and authorized sentiments of the national church. In allusion to the fall, this homily remarks, "Adam took upon him to eat of the forbidden tree, and in so doing he died the death," that is to say, he became mortal; he lost the favour of God; he was cast out of paradise; he was no longer a citizen of heaven; but a firebrand of hell, and a bond-slave of the devil." And, in reference to the entail of Adam's guilt upon his offspring, it goes on to remark: "to this doth our Saviour bear witness in the gospel, calling us 'lost sheep.' To this also doth St. Paul bear witness, saying, that by the offence of only Adam, death came upon all men to

condemnation. So that now, neither he, nor any of his, had any right or interest at all in the kingdom of heaven, but were become plain reprobates and castaways; being perpetually damned to the everlasting pains of hell-fire. In this so great misery and wretchedness, if mankind could have recovered himself again, and obtained forgiveness at God's hands, then had his case been somewhat tolerable; because he might have attempted some way how to deliver himself from eternal death. But there was no way left to him; he could do nothing that might pacify God's wrath; he was altogether unprofitable in that behalf."[19] And then, in allusion to the sovereign, and only remedy, for man's universal malady, this same homily continues: "But, O the abundant riches of God's great mercy! O the unspeakable goodness of his heavenly

[19] *Vide* Second Homily upon our Lord's Passion.

wisdom! When all hope of righteousness was past on our part; when we had nothing in ourselves, whereby we might quench his burning wrath, and work the salvation of our own souls; and rise out of the miserable state wherein we lay: then, even then, did Christ, the Son of God, by the appointment of his Father, come down from heaven, to be wounded for our sakes; to be reputed with the wicked; to be condemned unto death; to take upon him the reward of our sins; and to give his body to be broken on the cross for our offences!"

CONCLUSION.—*The practical duties suggested by our subject, are too important to be overlooked.*

1. We are taught by it to seek the assistance of the Holy Spirit; to discover to us our wanderings. We do not perceive them clearly, by the mere light of our reason. One effect of the

fall is, that the understanding is blinded, and the heart hardened, and we therefore need divine illumination. And what a distinguished blessing is it, that the Lord Jehovah is willing to bestow this gift upon us! That we may not be discouraged in our search after it, by the invaluable nature of the boon, or our entire unworthiness of it, Christ expressly encourages us to apply for it. "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."[20]

2. Humble and persevering prayer, therefore, is a practical duty, of which the consciousness of weakness should remind us, since grace to press onward in our course; preservation from the in-

[20] Luke xi. 10, and following verses.

numerable perils by which that course is surrounded; and victory over our spiritual adversaries, must each and all be sought at a throne of grace, by earnest and diligent supplication. It is of the highest importance for the Christian ever to recollect, where his spiritual strength lies. "I can do all things," said the apostle of the Gentiles, "through Christ, who strengthen-me."[21] "Without me," said our Lord, "ye can do nothing."

3. Our subject should, moreover, teach us to beware, how we stray again from the fold. It is our duty to keep close to the good shepherd; to remember the snares and temptations which await all wanderers from the pastures provided for the flock; to bear in mind, that, there is a powerful enemy waiting to allure, and watching to destroy the sheep; one, who is roaming abroad as

[21] Phil. iv. 13.

a roaring lion and ravening wolf, "seeking whom he may devour."

4. We are taught, lastly, to view, by faith, the guilt of our wanderings transferred to the head of our Shepherd; even to him "who bore our sins, and carried our sorrows; who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; upon whom was the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed."[22] And great was the enormity, and heinous was the guilt, which demanded such an expiatory sacrifice! Fearful was the incumbrance, and prodigious was the debt, which could only be cancelled by the payment of such a ransom! Appalling was the wrath, and tremendous was the curse, which could only be averted from us by bursting upon the head of our Almighty surety! And vain would the puny efforts of man have been, to effect that

[22] Isaiah liii. 4—5.

mighty and stupendous work, which brought him, who framed the world out of nothing, from heaven to earth; which veiled the glories of his Godhead in the humiliation of his manhood; and which caused him, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, to make himself of no reputation; to take upon him the form of a servant; to humble himself; to become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross!"[23] Contemplate, my brethren, the marvellous display of compassion and mercy, which that cross exhibits—look at the victim extended upon it—inquire what was his crime—ask who were his murderers—learn the purpose of his suffering! The victim was, "He who spake and the world was made; who commanded, and it stood fast!" His crime was, that "he loved us, and gave himself for us!" His murderers were, those

[23] Phil. ii. 6—8.

"whom he came to seek and to save!" And the purpose of his suffering was, that "dying, the just for the unjust, he might bring us to God!"

"Behold then, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"[24] Hear his address to the wanderers from his fold: "look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else!"[25] Listen to his gracious invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"[26]

[24] John i. 29. [25] Isaiah xlv. 22. [26] Matt. xi. 28.

## DISCOURSE II.

JER. xvii. 9.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*

IN my introductory discourse upon the CONFESSION, I directed your attention to the first clause of that beautiful and appropriate formulary of our church. We then considered, 1.—The character under which we are to approach God, as an "Almighty and merciful Father."—2. The acknowledgment of our departure from him, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep;"

and, in conclusion, the important and salutary lessons which these topics suggested. On the present occasion, your attention will be directed to the next clause, "We have followed too much, the devices and desires of our own hearts;" and the manifold and alarming dangers which result from this conduct, may be learned from the statement of the text; "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

In this second clause of the Confession then, we have—FIRST, *our original corruption implied; "the devices and desires of our heart."* We have—SECONDLY, *the practical influence of this original corruption plainly declared, "We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts."* And may our earnest prayer be, that the Lord God would "create in us new and contrite hearts; that, we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of him, the God of all mercy, per-

fect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord."[1]

I. Innumerable are the proofs, that the heart of man, in its natural state, is filled with enmity against God. The habitual tendency of its movements is, to oppose the will, and rebel against the authority of God. Man was created in the image of his Maker, but "he sought out many inventions."[2] He was seduced from his allegiance to Jehovah; he forfeited his innocence; he lost his resemblance to the holy Being who formed him from the dust; and then, a fountain of evil sprung up in his heart, which, in every successive age, has continued to send forth, as it were, torrents of corrupt devices and wicked desires.

The primitive condition of man may be learned from the first chapter of the book of Genesis. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and so God created man in

[1] Collect for the first day of Lent. [2] Eccles. vii. 29.

his own image, in the image of God created he him." The fall of Adam, and the denunciation of the curse upon his disobedience, are related at large in the third chapter of this book; and in the sixth chapter, we have the history of the lamentable effects of original corruption, as it spread itself over the moral surface of the globe. "God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, and the earth was filled with violence."[3] These were the corrupt streams, which issued from the corrupt fountain; and the character of the fountain itself, is stated in a preceding verse. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually."[4] The Hebrew word, which is here translated "imagination," also signifies the "purposes and desires of the heart," which are synonymous terms with those employed

[3] Gen. vi. 12. [4] Gen. vi. 5.

in our confession. Thus the Lord God, "who knoweth the secrets of the heart," declares, that all the purposes and desires which arise there, "are only evil continually;" while our church, not only distinctly recognises the existence of the fact, but traces our actual delinquencies from this prolific source of iniquity, when she says, "we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts." The language of the ninth article upon original, or, as it terms it, "birth sin," is, at once, scriptural and conclusive. "Original sin is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone," or, as the original Latin expresses it, is as far as possible gone, "from original righteousness; and is, of his own nature, inclined to evil."

The various iniquities, which have disgraced the successive generations of

mankind, have arisen, on the one hand, from a corrupt heart contriving and devising them; and, on the other, from the evil passions of men desiring, and eager to commit them. Were persons, who are least accustomed to contemplate the human character, as it is reflected by the mirror of scripture, to ponder, with serious attention, the movements of their own mind, they would readily discover innumerable vestiges of the fall of Adam.

Reflect, for example, my brethren, upon the manner in which you habitually regard the God who made you. Have your affections been kindled at the recollection of his mercies? Have your thoughts of him always been suitable to the majesty of his character? Have your desires been drawn out after spiritual communion with him? Has your heart been prostrate before him, prepared to confide implicitly in his wis-

dom, and to submit entirely to his power? Or rather, if conscience were permitted to bear its unbiassed testimony, would it not convict you of oftentimes overlooking the tender mercies of God; of entertaining thoughts degrading to the dignity of his divine perfections; of feeling little anxiety to know him in the beauty of his holiness; and, instead of a simple confidence, and filial submission—of not unfrequently indulging a proud and haughty spirit—of being wiser than your Maker—of prying into secret and forbidden things—and, perhaps, of forsaking plain and obvious duties, for some vain formality or unmeaning superstition?

When we desire to palliate the failings, or to offer an apology for the misconduct of an individual, it is not an uncommon mode of expression to remark, "this person, it is true, is led away by his passions; or is hasty in his re-

sentments; or is indiscreet in his conduct: but then his heart is good." It would be well, if, in our colloquial intercourse, we avoided the use of terms, which, in their plain and literal sense, are at variance with the solemn declarations of sacred writ; for, in the utmost latitude of charity, it would be difficult to reconcile expressions such as this, with the positive assertion of the text, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." So far indeed from the possibility of the heart being right, when the conduct is wrong; so far from the root being in a sound state, when the fruit it produces is unsound, there is not a single iniquity, whether open or secret, whether small or heinous, whether accidental or habitual, which does not derive its birth, and spring, and origin, from a corrupt and depraved heart. Hence, remarked our Lord, "there is nothing from without

a man, that entering into him can defile him, but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."[5] When you adopt the language of the confession then, bear in mind, my brethren, how ensnaring and dangerous are the devices and desires, which you acknowledge to dwell within you; and earnestly pray, that "the thoughts of your heart" may be "cleansed, by the influence of the Holy Spirit."

Particular situations and circumstances call forth particular vices, while others, by withholding the temptation, remove us to a greater distance from the influence of their contagion. The

[5] Mark vii. 20—23.

seeds of moral evil, however, are implanted in the hearts of all, and nothing but the restraining and preventing grace of God, can effectually preserve us from exhibiting their practical fruit. If, therefore, we have been enabled to avoid gross and open sins—if we have been preserved from the excesses into which others may have fearlessly plunged—we have not, on this account, any thing whereof to glory, since, had we done all that is commanded us, we must yet confess, that, "we are unprofitable servants." The haughtiness of the natural mind resists the application of these humiliating truths, and hence the second homily remarks,—"The Holy Ghost, in writing the Holy Scripture, is in nothing more diligent than to pull down man's vain glory and pride, which, of all vices, is most universally grafted in all mankind, even from the first infection of our father Adam; and, therefore, we read many notable lessons against this old-

rooted vice, to teach us how to know ourselves, and to remember what we be of ourselves." And that we may have clear and scriptural views of our true condition, the second part of this same homily observes,—"We are all become unclean, but we are not able to cleanse ourselves, nor to make one another clean; we are by nature the children of God's wrath, but we are not able to make ourselves the children of his glory; we are sheep that run astray, but we cannot of our own power come again to the sheepfold."

Archbishop Cranmer thus speaks of the doctrine we are considering:—"Hereby you perceive how our first parents, Adam and Eve, poisoned with the venom of the serpent, were cast into four horrible vices or diseases. The first is, that they did not trust in God; the second, that they did not love God; the third, that they did not fear him; the fourth, that they were replenished

with evil desires, lusts, and appetites: and these be the roots of original sin, out of the which all other sins do spring and grow. And as our first parents were infected and corrupted, even so be we that be their children."[6]

But, not only is the doctrine of our original corruption *implied*, in the clause of the confession upon which my present discourse is grounded, *the practical influence of this original corruption is*, as I am SECONDLY to notice, *plainly declared*:— "We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts."

1. These devices and desires are not in a dormant state; they are, in the soul of the transgressor, the main-spring of action. The whole conduct of the unregenerate man proves, that he lives to gratify himself, and that he knows no superior impulse to passion and appetite. Hence, if you separate him from his pleasures, and deprive him of the op-

[6] Cranmer's Catechism, printed 1548.

portunity of doing evil, he is a forlorn and wretched being; he is destitute of all taste for higher pursuits, he feels no desire after communion with God, he derives no delight from his service. To every thing that relates to spiritual exercises, and to every thing which involves the momentous concerns of the soul, and eternity, "he is dead, while he seemeth to live."

2. In the heart of those, too, whom divine grace has renewed, corrupt devices and desires are still found. They are yet in existence, and must be mourned over; they yet urge their unhallowed claims, and must be resisted; they yet struggle for the mastery, and must be grappled with, and subdued. It is true, that human strength would be weakness in a contest of this nature, but we must enter upon the daily warfare in the strength of him, who overcometh the grand adversary of man, and "taketh from him his armour

wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."[7]

They who are true members of Christ have repented of their evil devices. They are justified by faith in the righteousness of Christ, and are sanctified by his Holy Spirit; and the effect of this great change is, that "old things pass away, behold all things become new." This was the case with the Corinthian converts, whom St. Paul reminds of the condition in which the grace of God found them, and of the change it wrought upon them:—"And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."[8]

The desires of the regenerate, then, as the work of sanctification proceeds within them, will be fixed upon the Saviour. He will become more precious in their sight; they will live by faith in

[7] Luke xi. 22. [8] 1 Cor. vi. 11.

him; "his yoke will be easy, and his burden light."[9]

Their walk and conversation will be changed. New habits will be adopted, new pursuits will be entered upon; a new life will be exhibited. Neither are these the evidences of the operation of divine grace, in particular periods, and under particular circumstances — they are the permanent and unvarying results of the regeneration of the Spirit, in all periods, and under all circumstances. Hence, one of the first indications of the change, which divine grace effects upon the heart of the transgressor, will be, a separation from the workers of iniquity; an abandonment of the sinful pursuits in which he was formerly occupied; a renunciation of the vanities and pleasures which in times past drew off his affections from Jehovah; and a persevering determination to do that only, which is lawful and right before God, notwithstanding the scoff-

9 Matt. xi. 30.

ings of the infidel, and the sneer of fools.

This change, however, although great and important, is not perfect. The Christian, although differing much and essentially from his former self, is, at best, an infirm and frail creature. He is still under the influence of too many evil devices; he is still under the influence of too many vagrant desires. He is like a diseased man whose cure is in progress, but who is yet a patient; he resembles one whose malady is checked, but not wholly eradicated; he occupies the position of him whose recovery is certain, but gradual. While this should encourage, it should also humble the Christian; while it enables him to look forward with confidence to the end, it should lead him to take heed to his steps in the way; while it may stimulate him to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,"[10] it should keep in his re-

[10] Phil. iii. 14.

collection, the importance of doing this in a spirit of self-distrust and humility, and "not as if he had already attained, either were already perfect."[11] The most holy of mankind have lamented the influence of remaining corruption within them, and those who have attained a right view of their spiritual character, will ever continue to do this. All will exclaim, "we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts!"

Let the disciple of Christ look into his own mind, and retrace the thoughts which have passed through it, in the course of the present day. How many vain imaginations will he discover—how many evil desires—how many devices to "establish his own righteousness," instead of meekly "submitting to the righteousness of Christ!" The holy truths of the religion of the Saviour, are to be received with reverence and

[11] Phil. iii. 12.

submission; and however they may abase our pride, and demolish our self-dependence, they are not, on this account, to be cavilled at, or called in question. Whatever is prefaced by, "Thus saith the Lord," should find a ready access to the obedience of those who profess to be the servants, and to be living in the fear of the Lord. This, my Christian brethren, you are fully aware of; but how often have you needlessly perplexed yourselves about difficulties, with which you have nothing to do? How often have theoretical fancies drawn off your attention from practical duties? You would, perhaps, be wise above that which is written; you may be seeking to know the secret purposes of God; you may be trying to reach "things out of your sight," instead of "taking heed to your ways," and proceeding humbly and usefully in the path before you.

To one profitable thought, may I not

truly say, that we have a thousand unprofitable devices! "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." And we still "follow too much the devices and desires of our own hearts!"

1. There is abundant proof of this, even in the discharge of our duties.

The grand end, to which every action of the Christian should be directed, is the honour and praise of God. But where is the man, who can truly say, that this is his uniform, unmingled, and paramount principle of action? Where is the man, who can deny, that many lower motives, like alloy in the precious metals, are mingled with his most sacred duties, and blended with the discharge of his most solemn obligations?

2. In our manner of performing that, which is in itself good, we are misled by the devices of a corrupt heart.

Do we prostrate ourselves at a throne of grace, to tell out our sorrows and ne-

cessities in prayer? How prone are our thoughts to wander! How cold is the frame of our affections and feelings? How apt are we to solicit that, which would be prejudicial to the soul, and to overlook that, which would be profitable for it?

Do we enter the sacred courts of the Lord, and listen to the ministers and stewards of the divine mysteries; who stand, as it were, between the living and the dead, and convey a message from God to our soul? How difficult is it, to keep the attention alive to the subject? How ingenious are we in avoiding the application of the truth to ourselves? And instead of seeking to "receive the sincere milk of the word, that we may thrive and grow thereby," [12] how prone is the mind to be hypercritical and fastidious, to cavil and object? If the motives which influence the large mass of professing Christians, while employed

[12] 1 Peter ii. 2.

in the duties of the sanctuary, were rigidly analysed, how various and discordant would they prove! How large a portion of them would not bear the scrutiny; how small a portion would be found to consist in a desire to "receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls!"[13] The alloy, which pervades the whole circle of our movement, is thus described in the Homilies, wherein our church, contemplating the human character, as the mirror of holy scripture reflects it, exhibits it to her members in true and faithful colours. "Let us all confess with mouth and heart, that we be full of imperfections; let us know our own works of what imperfection they be, and then we shall not stand foolishly and arrogantly in our own conceits, nor challenge any part of justification by our own merits or works. For, truly, there be imperfections in our best works;

[13] James i. 21.

we do not love God so much as we are bound to do; we do not fear God so much as we ought to do; we do not pray to God but with many and great imperfections; we give, forgive, believe, live, and hope imperfectly; we fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh imperfectly; let us, therefore, not be ashamed to confess plainly our state of imperfection; yea, let us not be ashamed to confess imperfection, even in all our best works."[14]

Thus then, my brethren, are the statements of scripture, and the assertions of the national church, in perfect unison with the testimony of experience and of fact, that while the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, "we have followed too much the devices and desires of the heart."

Conclusion.—1. The view we have taken of the topic before us, will banish

[14] Second part of Homily, on the Misery of Man.

surprise from the mind, at the errors which prevail upon the subject of religion.

The devices and desires of a corrupt heart, mislead both the judgment and the practice; it is, therefore, only natural, that the unregenerate should wander from the truth, and become bewildered amidst the labyrinths of error. A perverted judgment will approve that, which a corrupt heart delights in, and will be ready to condemn that, which would curb the unruly affections, and restrain the vagrant desires of the heart. And hence it is, that those who wish to be indulged in a greater latitude of conduct, than is in strict accordance with the doctrines of the gospel, are opposed to the spirituality of those doctrines—denounce them as rigid and austere—and are best pleased when they are only superficially stated, and not carried out into their practical bearings, and individual application. But, however blind men may

be, and however hostile they may be, to the humiliating doctrines of our holy religion, the nature of truth is unaltered—its reality and power continue to exist; and the most ingenious theories—the most subtle distinctions—the most elaborate arguments, cannot alter the fact, that, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

2. We may trace, in the subject we have considered, the strong and scriptural ground, upon which the doctrine of the new birth rests; since, this important doctrine must necessarily stand, or fall, with the doctrine of original corruption. For, if man be corrupt, and God be holy, as there is no concord between Christ and Belial, man must be made holy before he can enjoy communion with God; and in order to be holy, he must be regenerate; he must be made a new creature; he must be transformed, by divine power, from the likeness of Satan which he has imbibed, into

the image of God which he has lost; in a word, he must be "born," as the evangelist expresses it, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[15]

3. We are taught, moreover, to distrust ourselves, and to guard against the evil desires of the heart. It was quaintly, but well and truly said, by an old writer, that "we should look upon the heart as a villain and a rogue, and trust it as little as we should do such a character as this." But, alas! we do not act upon such sound advice. Although constantly deceived by it, we continue to confide in it; we fall into its snares to-day, and submit to its guidance to-morrow; we are entangled by its allurements at one moment, and yet we listen to its blandishments the next. "We follow too much the devices and desires of our own heart!"

4. How simple, LASTLY, should our

[15] John i. 13.

reliance be, upon the guidance and teaching of the Spirit of Jehovah! If every holy thought, and every good desire, come from him, how earnestly and frequently should we seek his presence with us! If without him there is nothing strong and nothing holy, how earnestly and frequently should we deprecate his departure from us!

Are you, then, desirous to be conducted "into all truth?" Confide in the direction of him who will not, who cannot mislead you; who will receive you into the arms of his mercy; and draw you by the cords of his love; and preserve you, "by his power, through faith, unto salvation." "Then, says Jehovah, will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do

them; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God!"[16]

Thus then, my brethren, do we see, that, while one page of Holy Scripture points out our danger, another directs us to the refuge; while one represents us as criminals, another proclaims a pardon; while one exhibits, and probes our wounds, another supplies the antidote, and pours in the balm of consolation!

[16] Ezekiel xxxvi. 25—28.

## DISCOURSE III.

Eccles. vii. 20.

*For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.*

In the two first clauses of the confession, which have already passed under our notice, we were directed by our church to an acknowledgment of our departure from God, and to a contemplation of our original corruption. The clauses, to which I am now to direct your attention, very affectingly point out, *our actual transgressions*:—"We have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to

have done." And to show how closely our church breathes the language of Holy Scripture, upon this most important subject, the words of the text assure us, that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not."

In bringing before you the great doctrine of our actual depravity, as expressly enforced in the confession of our church, my object will be, FIRST, to point out *the guilt of the offence*, and, SECONDLY, to trace *its twofold character*.

And "Grant us, O Lord, we beseech thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful, that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without thee, may, by thee, be enabled to live according to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"[1]

Sin derives much of its heinous character from a contemplation of the per-

[1] Collect for the 9th Sunday after Trinity.

fections of the Being against whom it is committed. This is pleaded, in aggravation of our guilt, in the first clause before us:—"We have offended against thy *holy* laws."

The laws which were framed and delivered by Jehovah, were designed, at once, to promote his own glory, and advance the true happiness of man. These laws were holy, because, whatever proceeds from God receives "the impress of the purity of the divine character; "wherefore," says St. Paul, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."[2] The Lord God is the Sovereign of the Universe, and is, therefore, legally entitled to establish whatever laws he may see fit, for the regulation of the conduct of his creatures. Statutes and ordinances, then, which issue from such a source, and are directed to such a purpose, upon every principle of equity and justice, claim the observance of those

[2] Romans vii. 12.

for whom they were designed; and when it is recollected, that obedience to the laws of Jehovah would have secured peace, and tranquillity, and happiness, to man, the folly, as well as the guilt of transgression, is rendered more clearly apparent. The language of the Lord God, to Israel of old, was—"If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them, then will I give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time, and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid."[3]

The immutable obligations of the laws of Jehovah, in all their magnitude and force, rest upon his creatures, both

[3] Levit. xxvi. 3—6.

in their collective and individual capacity.

As a covenant of works, indeed, and as a mean of obtaining salvation, the law was abrogated by the "full, perfect, and sufficient atonement," wrought out, on our behalf, by the Saviour; and that we are justified only by faith in this atonement, is evident from the frequent and forcible declarations of Scripture. St. Paul to the Galatian church, remarks—"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law—for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."[4] And that our own church may not be suspected of invalidating this great doctrine, and of leaning to the fatal error of the Church of Rome upon the efficacy of human merit, the

[4] Gal. ii. 16.

11th article is as clear, and decisive, upon this point, as if St. Paul himself had framed it:—"We are accounted righteous before God *only* for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works and deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the homily of justification."

But, although the moral law is abrogated as a saving covenant, that it is still in existence, in all its energy and force, as a rule of life, is equally evident, upon the same unquestionable authority. For, inquires the apostle, "do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law." "Think not," said our Lord, in his sermon on the mount, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets—I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Whosoever, therefore, shall break

one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."[5]

By the holy law of Jehovah shall we hereafter be judged: by our conformity or opposition to his revealed word, will our future happiness or misery be determined. "For as many," we are told, "as have sinned without the law, shall also perish without the law, and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law—for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."[6]

The utter inability of man to render a perfect obedience to the requirements of the law, was pointed out in my discourse upon the effects of our original corruption. Our church, therefore, does

[5] Matt. v. 17—19. [6] Rom. ii. 12, 13.

not attempt to set up a plea of merit which she could never establish, but in the name, and on behalf of her members, abandons every pretence to such plea in the admission before us—"We have offended against thy holy laws."

Every violation of the law is an insult offered to the majesty of heaven. Every violation of the law is a proof of rebellion against the Being, who formed us from the dust, and endowed us with a living and intelligent soul. Every violation of the law is an act of ingratitude to the Benefactor, who feeds, and clothes, preserves, and blesses us. And every violation of the law is doing despite to the grace of our heavenly Father, "who withheld not his Son, his only Son, from us," but surrendered him to die, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

As easy would it have been for Jehovah to have destroyed the world by a word, as it was to create it by his

word; but when "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;" when "it repented the Lord that he had made man, and grieved him at his heart," he graciously devised a plan to save him; and "willing not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live," he provided a remedy and a ransom for him, in the person of the Mediator Christ! And what are our returns for this unspeakable mercy? How have we shown our gratitude for this marvellous display of divine compassion? "We have offended against his holy laws!"

As a parent, Jehovah supplies the temporal wants, and provides for the spiritual benefit of his children; they, in return for his care, throw off his parental authority, and despise his fatherly correction! As a master, he claims the obedience of those who avow themselves his servants; they practically deny the claim, and voluntarily enter

into the service of another! As a sovereign, he is entitled to the homage of his subjects; they proudly withhold their allegiance; raise the standard of rebellion against him; and openly, and fearlessly, espouse the cause of the enemy! And, as a Saviour, he suffered, bled, and died, to redeem transgressors from the curse, and to rescue them from "the bitter pains of eternal death;" they, in return, for "the unsearchable riches of his grace," are unmoved by his mercy—are deaf to his entreaties—despise his warnings—and "neglect his great salvation!"

But, notwithstanding the practical disregard, with which the holy laws of God are too often treated, in proportion as the soul of the sinner is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, will he be struck by their excellence and beauty. Thus, we find the psalmist remarking—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. The

law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path!"[7] Were mankind, at large, spiritually acquainted with, and sincerely and conscientiously desirous to honour, the laws of their Maker, what a delightful change would be produced upon the moral face of the globe? The effect of this, upon large communities, would be, that there would be neither "wars, nor rumours of war;" "swords would be beaten into plough-shares, and spears into pruning hooks; nation would not lift up sword against nation, neither would they learn war any more."[8] The effect upon individuals would be, that "envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness," would take their flight; that pride, and

[7] Psalm cxix. 71—72; 103—105.

[8] Isaiah ii. 4.

ambition, and cruel oppression, would be known no more; that restrictive laws, and penal enactments would no longer be required to preserve the social compact; but, instead of these standing proofs of human corruption, those "whom God has made of one blood," would love as brethren; would be kind and pitiful; would seek each other's welfare; strive for each other's benefit; pray for each other's happiness! Instead of the fruits of the flesh, which are "emulations, wrath, seditions, heresies;" we should see "the fruits of the Spirit abound," which are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." Instead of the image of Satan, into which man was transformed by the fall, we should discover a lovely exhibition of the image of God!

Let the guilt, then, of our offence, in trangressing the laws of Jehovah, be seriously contemplated. The most ad-

vanced Christian must adopt the language of the confession, with the deepest humility, until his entrance into the pure abodes of heaven! This language of contrition is suited to the penitent sinner; to the believer, in all the stages of his progress; to every class and condition of man. All must, with one voice, exclaim, "we have offended against thy holy laws!"

Having, then, considered the guilt of the offence, we are, SECONDLY, *to trace out its twofold character.* "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

The branches of transgression here referred to, relate to the *commands* of God on the one hand, to his *prohibitions* on the other. The former we have not obeyed, the latter we have not regarded; or, as the confession has divided the subject, our transgression con-

sists of sins of *omission* and of *commission*. The former branch is included in the expression, "we have left undone the things which we ought to have done."

Reflect, my brethren, upon what is required in the first commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment." But, when did you ever keep this command? when did you ever approximate to this state of affection and feeling? when, for a single day, or a single hour, have you arrived at that absorbing concentration of heart, and mind, and soul, upon the divine perfections and attributes, as to make a full and unqualified surrender, of all their powers, to the service and glory of Jehovah?

Consider the graces of repentance and faith, which the religion of Christ

requires to be in constant exercise. Our whole existence ought to be one uniform and lively exhibition of these graces. But alas! how faintly have they been reflected in our conduct! How wavering and indistinct, have been the traces of them, throughout the whole circle of our movement! Humiliating, indeed, is the reflection, that some of the heathen philosophers, in forming a just estimate, and in paying a due regard to practical duties, have advanced further than many nominal Christians; and these will doubtless rise up in the judgment to condemn thousands, who have been baptized in the name, and profess to be the followers of Jesus!

Contemplate then, my brethren, your offences of omission. The religion of the world is *a religion of omissions*. An individual may be accounted *orthodox*, in the common, but erroneous acceptation of the term, and yet be wanting in every Christian temper, and

deficient in every branch of Christian conduct.

Forms are good and necessary in their proper place; but if the spirit of religion be absent, they are only as a dead letter. The shadow, although it accompanies the substance, without the substance, will vanish into nothing. Be it our care, then, while engaged in the beautiful and scriptural services of our church, and while adopting the language of those formularies, which breathe so devout and hallowed a spirit, as to be inferior only to the sacred page itself—be it our care, that the soul may respond to the sentiments uttered by the lips, "lest, while we cry Lord! Lord! our heart be far from him!"

But, bear with me, my brethren, while I apply the test we are considering, in another direction. 1. Examine your secret and family devotions, and inquire, whether, in the discharge of these

duties, you are free from offences of omission? Admitting the existence of a punctual attention to the letter of these obligations, shall we not discover a great want of spirituality, and true devotion, in the performance of them? Will not our religious exercises be oftentimes found cold and formal, with little of that lively gratitude, and ardent affection, which ought to glow in the heart of the transgressor, when pouring out his soul to Him, "who loved us, and gave himself for us?"

But, while some omit the cultivation of a suitable spirit and temper, in the performance of devotional duties, there are others, alas! who omit these duties altogether. The voice of prayer, and thanksgiving, is seldom heard in their closet, and never at the family altar; the world is rarely excluded that they may commune with Jehovah in private; and their household are never assembled

to unite in acknowledging him, "in whom they live, and move, and have their being."

Let us examine again, whether we are rightly employing our talents. Time, property, and influence, are talents, for the disposal of which we must render a solemn account. The Roman Emperor, Titus, upon recollecting that he had conferred no benefit upon his subjects during the day, uttered the memorable exclamation, "I have lost a day!"

And when the evening closes upon us, and brings with it its testimony, that nothing has been done which bears upon the grand end of our existence; that no progress has been made in our journey to a better country; that no plan has been acted upon, to promote the divine glory, and advance the best interests of our fellow-creatures, the Christian may mournfully exclaim, "I have lost a day!" But, we are stewards of all we possess; and "it is required in stew-

ards, that a man be found faithful."[9] Important, then, is the inquiry, whether we are faithful stewards, in the employment and distribution of our substance? whether we are faithful stewards in the direction we give to our influence? It will be a fearful reflection hereafter, that, from our wealth, or rank, or station, or acquirements, we *might* have done much to subserve the interests of true religion, and the honour of God, but that *we buried our talents in a napkin!* The danger of the sin of omission, in reference to these particulars, is forcibly shown in the parable of the talents; where, of the individual who neglected to employ his one talent, our Lord remarked, "cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."[10]

Consider, moreover, the way in which you have listened to the voice of Providence. Have you followed where it has

[9] 1 Cor. iv. 2. [10] Matt. xxv. 30.

evidently called you; have you cherished the grace bestowed upon you; have you been passive under the chastening hand of your heavenly Father; has your aim, and desire, been, that your "tribulation might work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, even a hope that maketh not ashamed?"[21]

To what point have we advanced, as it regards a growth in grace and knowledge? What is our measure of attainment in love to the Redeemer, in zeal for his cause, in diligence in his service? Where do we stand, as it respects the forgiveness of injuries; as it relates to tenderness of conscience, and a godly jealousy over the deceitfulness of the heart? In reference to all these branches of duty, with one voice we must say, "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done!"

II. But, contemplate, lastly, your

[21] Rom. v. 3—5.

sins of *commission*. "We have done those things which we ought not to have done." If every deviation from what is right, in thought, word, and deed, be an offence against God, how innumerable are our offences! If every idle word that men shall speak, shall rise up against them in the judgment, "O Lord, who shall stand?" We need not look for open and gross crimes to prove that we are sinners, since every evil temper does this; since every angry word establishes the charge against us; since every unholy action convicts us of being guilty before God. All concur to show, that our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head; that "we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

As I would, with much earnestness and affection, press this subject upon your conscience, let me entreat you to try your conduct by the third commandment. Have you never, in careless

jesting, or unholy excitement, taken the name of the Lord in vain? Many, perhaps, may be ready to reply, "we are not blasphemers—we are not profane swearers—and, therefore, we are free from this charge. But, my brethren, have you never taken the Lord's name in vain in your *devotions?* Does your heart always respond to the language of your lips, when the name of Jehovah is in your mouth? And are your affections and feelings always in unison with your professions, when you bow the knee before him, and call upon his name? For, we must not blind ourselves to the fact, that, to confess the Lord with our lips, while we deny him in our conduct, is to take his name in vain.

Try yourselves by the fourth commandment. Have the occupations of business, or the attractions of pleasure, never been suffered by you to encroach upon the sanctity of the sabbath? Is nothing done by you on the seventh

day, which ought to be done upon the sixth? Are you invariably careful, that, neither thyself, thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, thy cattle, nor the stranger within thy gate, should, on that sacred day, "do any manner of work?"

Try your conduct again by the ninth commandment. In the oath proposed to witnesses in our criminal courts, they promise to speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Have you, my beloved brethren, upon all occasions, spoken the truth of your neighbour? Have you stated the whole truth—that which would make in his favour, as well as that which would tell against him? And have you uttered nothing, but the simple, honest, unvarnished truth; adding no evil surmisings; no unkind suspicions; no secret whispers to his prejudice, which would violate the charity that thinketh no evil?

Once more try yourselves by the 10th commandment. "Have you always rejoiced in the prosperity of your neighbour, without the risings of envy, and the corrodings of jealousy? Have you invariably contemplated the possessions of others, without regret that they were not your own?" Is there, in no direction, a Naboth's vineyard, after which your desires and affections are roving?

Let masters, too, try their conduct towards their servants, and let servants examine their fidelity towards their masters; let parents and children try themselves by the standard of their respective obligations; let all "judge themselves, that they be not judged of God," and then, the united confession of all will be, "we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

Conclusion.—Bear with me, brethren, for a few moments only, while I draw one or two brief inferences from this important subject.

1. We may hence learn, that, the sinner knows every thing better than the character of his own heart; and the reason of this is, because he is more attentive to every other subject than to this. He is alive to what is passing around him, but dead to what is passing in his own breast; the eye of sense exercises its functions properly upon the visible creation, while the eye of the mind is closed upon the movements of the busy world within him.

2. And hence arises the need which all have of the teaching of the holy Spirit. Nicodemus, who was a master in Israel, was ignorant of the most essential doctrines of the gospel; and many now, who are masters in human science and research, have to learn the first rudiments of saving knowledge.

3. The last lesson our subject teaches, is, the unspeakable blessing of a Saviour, to wash us from our guilt, and deliver us from the dominion of sin.

The hand that preserved Peter from sinking in the ocean, can check the transgressor in the midst of his wanderings, and restore him to the fold; the balm which staunched the wound of the woman of Gadara, can close our wounds and heal our spiritual malady; the power that raised Lazarus from the dead, can raise us from the death of sin to a life of righteousness; the mercy which extended to the dying thief upon the confines of eternity, can reach the hoary transgressor now, in the eleventh hour; the voice which appeased the winds, and calmed the waves, can soothe the troubled conscience of the penitent, and whisper, "peace be still!"

## DISCOURSE IV.

JEREMIAH viii. 22.

*Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

IN this chapter the prophet upbraids the impenitency of the Jews, makes known the judgments which would follow, and bewails their desperate condition. The descendants of Abraham, notwithstanding their many and great privileges, transgressed the laws of their Maker, disregarded his ordinances, and followed their own wicked and perverse imaginations. "Why then," we read in

the 5th and subsequent verses, "is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding, they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done, every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed time, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

In a manner similar to this, does our church, in her confession, describe our wanderings, depravity, and consequent wretchedness. "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep; we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts; we have offended against thy holy laws; we have left undone those things which we ought

to have done; we have done those things which we ought not to have done;" adding, in the clause, which I am now more particularly to consider, "*and there is no health in us.*" Thus, from the proofs of original and actual corruption, our church draws the inference of our universal malady, applying to us the prophet Isaiah's description of the state of Israel, when he said, "the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint." Since the devices and desires of a depraved heart, on the one hand, and the innumerable transgressions of an evil practice, on the other, have robbed the soul of its original purity, and so infected the whole moral system, "that there is no health in us," how important does the inquiry in the text become? "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" In dis-

coursing from this verse, in connexion with the clause of our confession, I shall direct your notice,

FIRST. *To the nature of the malady of which they both speak.*

SECONDLY. *To the patient who is afflicted by it.*

THIRDLY. *To the physician who heals it.*

And may it please thee, O Lord God, who hath sent thy Son to be the physician of the church, "that, by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord."[1]

I. The malady then, referred to, is a fallen nature—an awful apostacy from God—a fearful and perilous degeneracy in heart and conduct.

Prior to the fall, the human soul was in perfect health; it was an image of

[1] Vide collect for St. Luke's, the Evangelist's Day.

its Maker's purity; it was a transcript of the Divine likeness; but, by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and the consequence, as David has expressed it, is, "we are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity."

The moral disease, thus introduced, is universal in its influence—it pervades our whole nature. Unlike those disorders which confine themselves to tropical climates, and particular latitudes; sin is a disorder which holds its deadly reign, in all climates, and is found in all latitudes; and, unlike those bodily distempers which only exhibit themselves upon particular parts of the frame, the effects of this spiritual malady are visible throughout the whole. The language of Jehovah is, "from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores."[2] To

[2] Isaiah i. 6.

this our church responds, "there is no health in us!"

II. There is not a single faculty of the mind, which does not share the effects of our spiritual disease.

1. See how it operates *upon the understanding*. "Having the understanding darkened," says the apostle, when writing to the Ephesians, "being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.[3]" And what are the practical evils which result from this spiritual blindness, in which the fall has involved the transgressor? The natural mind is "ignorant of the things which relate to its peace,"—it is incapable of exercising a sound and rational judgment upon the momentous concerns of the soul, and the realities of eternity: it "calls evil good, and good evil; it puts darkness for light, and light

[3] Ephes. iv. 18.

for darkness; it puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."[4]

2. *What are its effects upon the will?* It renders this faculty perverse, stubborn, rebellious, opposed to God, instead of being meek, submissive, acquiescent, and conformed to God. The rebellious opposition of the will to the dictates of reason and scripture, may be prominently traced throughout the diversified range of human movement. It may be collected from the regulations of the nursery, and the discipline of the school, which are adopted for the correction of this habit in early life,—it may be collected, from the enactment of restrictive laws and prohibitory statutes, which are applied, for the same purpose, in the maturer stages of the existence of man. For, the very fact, that a necessity exists for thus repressing and restraining the vagrant course of the human will, proves the diseased

[4] Isaiah v. 20.

state of the faculty itself; and shows, that were it suffered to have an unfettered range, the foundations of civil society and social order would be overthrown,—and headstrong passion, and unbridled appetite, and lawless tyranny, would triumph on their ruins!

3. *What, again, has been the influence of the fall upon the affections of the soul?* Instead of being spiritual, and holy, and attracted by heavenly objects, they are corrupt, and carnal, and rivetted upon earthly things. That which is "seen and temporal is preferred to that which is not seen and eternal." From a contemplation of the difference which exists between that, which an unregenerate man loves, desires, enjoys, and delights in, and that which would supply enjoyment to a pure and holy spirit, we shall at once perceive how corrupt, how debased are the affections of man.

4. Neither has the *memory* escaped the deteriorating influence of the fall.

Of the extraordinary powers of this faculty, in its unimpaired state, we may form some judgment, by reflecting upon the manner in which the almost innumerable animal and feathered tribes received their respective designation. "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.[5] And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field."[6] But, not

[5] Gen. ii. 19, 20.

[6] Most persons are aware of the labour which attends the act of acquiring the mere characters of an unknown language, as well as the difficulty of accurately connecting the symbols with the objects represented. Our first parent, however, was not only able, from the extensive range of his intellectual resources, to invent names for the numerous species of "beasts and all cattle, creeping things, and feathered fowls;" but, from the extraordinary

only is the memory enfeebled in its energies, there is also a degree of morbid perverseness about its operations, which can only be traced to the fall. For, how much more durable upon the mind are impressions which are calculated to injure the soul, than such as are calculated to promote its welfare? How much more readily does a child retain the image of that which should be forgotten, than of that which morality and piety would desire it to che-

strength of the faculty of memory, in its unimpaired state, could doubtless recognize with facility every individual class of the animal creation, according to the appropriate designation he had given it. And that the power of doing this, was beyond the grasp of the human intellect, in its fallen state, appears to have been admitted by the heathen philosophers. Plato remarked, "videri sibi, eam naturam, quæ rebus nomina imposuerit fuisse celsiorem hâc humanâ." And again, upon the same subject, he observed: "Hæc impositio nominum, *ου φαυλων ανδρων*, non est futilium hominum." —(Plato in Cratylo.)

rish? It is as difficult to erase from the mind the recollection of impressions which would sully its purity, as it is to retain and cherish those which would secure and preserve it. The memory is perversely *tenacious* of what is *wrong*, it is perversely *forgetful* of what is *right*.

5. But, how has the influence of our common malady affected *the conscience?* It has made it a blind guide—a partial judge—a dim lamp,—instead of a clear and steady light—instead of a faithful and vigilant monitor—instead of an active and wakeful sentinel.

III. *The members of the body too*, are under the dominion of this evil disease,—and of the manner in which they are rendered by it "instruments of unrighteousness," let an inspired apostle speak: "Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their

lips; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood."[7] The influence of our moral disorder may be traced in early infancy. How soon do we perceive in a child the murmurs of impatience—the risings of anger—the swellings of passion—the workings of resentment? Let a parent carefully contemplate the exhibition of these dispositions in his offspring, and say, whence they have arisen, if not from the depravity of our nature—or how they have been produced, if not from the corruption of the stock? Job furnishes a clue to this subject, when he says, "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"[8] "what is man that he should be clean, and he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"[9]

The malady we are considering is desperate as well as universal.

[7] Rom. iii. 13—15. [8] Job xiv. 4.
[9] Job xv. 14.

There are many disorders which are painful, but not mortal. Time, change of air, and of diet, will remove their cause, and remedy their effects. But our universal malady cannot thus be cured; it is as rottenness in the bones, which no human skill can heal; it is as a consumption in the vitals, which no human power can reach; it is as a leprosy, which pervades the whole frame; it is as a poison, which has spread its noxious qualities throughout the whole system.

There have been, and there are, those who imagine, that this moral leprosy might be healed, and this spiritual poison expelled, by human laws and human efforts. A notion like this, however, betrays a lamentable want of acquaintance with the character of the heart and the nature of man. We read of a monarch, who was assured by his flatterers, that if he placed his chair upon the sands of the sea, and com-

manded the waves not to approach his royal person, they would obey him; but they continued to advance, notwithstanding the haughty mandate: thereby convincing the flatterers, that over the elements of nature, "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." And thus, in reference to the disease to which our church alludes, it is too deeply seated, and too firmly rooted in the moral system, for human skill or power to cure; it continues to advance, notwithstanding the united efforts of the moralist and the legislator, and will be found to yield to nothing but the power and the mandate of the omnipotent Jehovah. Our disease, my brethren, lies in the heart; and as no remedy can cure, which does not reach the seat of the disorder, so nothing can cure this spiritual malady which does not penetrate the heart. The Lord God alone can "search the heart and try the reins of man,"[10] and

[10] Jerem. xvii. 10.

his grace alone can supply the healing specific. To every thing short of this, our malady is desperate, "and there is no health in us." Let us then,

SECONDLY. *Contemplate the patient who is affected by this deadly disease.*

1. Some of you, my brethren, have probably witnessed the scene of a patient, grievously afflicted, bitterly lamenting his disorder, and longing to be rid of it. This is precisely the state of mind in which our church supposes her members to be, when, bewailing their iniquity and guilt, she teaches them to exclaim, "there is no health in us." And would to God that it were always really thus—that all who confess, deeply felt their unworthiness—that all who acknowledge, truly bewailed their corruption!

2. Many persons assent to the doctrine of human depravity, in a general sense, but make no individual application of it to themselves. The sincere

Christian, however, brings this doctrine home to his conscience in confession. He is at no loss for illustrations of its truth, since, whithersoever he turns, they painfully haunt his steps: he discovers them in "the devices and desires of his own heart"—he traces them in the waverings and wanderings of his life. "When he would do good, evil is present with him."[11]

3. Many persons, again, are ready to confess every thing, while they feel nothing. Like the Romanist, they imagine the mere act of confession meritorious, forgetting, that they must "rend their heart, and not their garment, if they would turn unto the Lord their God."[12] The sincere Christian feels, as well as confesses—he confesses, because he feels — he mourns over his transgressions, because they press heavily upon his soul.

4. Many persons, moreover, are will-

[11] Rom. vii. 21. [12] Joel ii. 13.

ing to acknowledge particular sins, while they have not a right notion of the influence of a depraved heart. They think, that the root within them is sound, and consider their delinquencies rather as the result of contingency and accident, than as corrupt streams which issue from a polluted source. The enlightened Christian, however, knows, to his sorrow, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"[13]—that the impurity of the fountain is the cause of the impurity of the streams—that the decay of the root, is the cause of the rottenness of the branches. He knows this from the clearest of all proof—he learns it from what is daily passing within him—he is confirmed in it, by what is passing around him, and "God, who cannot lie," has declared it to be so!

An humble and scriptural acquaintance with ourselves is the most valuable species of knowledge: it is more to be

[13] Jeremiah xvii. 9.

prized than the highest attainments of human wisdom. A man may be a naturalist, and a philosopher; he may be deeply versed in the writings of antiquity; he may be able to calculate the distances, and periods of the planets; he may have travelled far along the range of worldly knowledge; he may have made great discoveries in human science; and, amidst all this, he may not have discovered one thing which it essentially concerns him to know—he may not have learned one lesson, which it is highly important he should be taught—that, in the sight of Jehovah, he is a lost and undone transgressor; that "there is no health in him!"

But, the salutary and invaluable acquisition, self-knowledge, cannot be arrived at at once; it is rather the business of a life to acquire it. Neither is it to be attained, like human science, by mere application and research. It is the result of patient and diligent self-

examination, aided by the blessing of God, and the teaching of his holy spirit. The best possible state of mind, then, is, when there is a deep, and tender, and abiding, conviction of corruption, united with a joyful hope in the grace and mercy of Christ; or, in other words, when deep humility is blended with lively faith.

Having thus considered the nature of the malady, to which our text and the Confession refer, and the patient who is afflicted by it, I am now to direct your attention,

THIRDLY, *To the physician who heals it.* "Is there no balm in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

It is the most pleasing part of a minister's duty to declare, that "there *is* balm in Gilead; that there *is* a physician there." "I," says Jehovah, "am the Lord that healeth." And this constitutes the ground of David's exhor-

tation, to praise and thanksgiving, in the 103d Psalm: "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

1. But, what is the balm which heals the wounds of the soul? Is it extracted from our own merits; from our holiest oblations; from our best, and most righteous observances? No! the precious blood of Christ is the balm which "cleanseth from all sin."

2. And how was this sovereign remedy obtained? Was it acquired by penances, or pilgrimages, or self-inflicted tortures? No! "Jesus loved us, and gave himself for us;" and whosoever meekly believes in him shall be healed of his malady. This never-failing balm was expressed from the agonized frame of the Redeemer, in the garden of Geth-

semane, when "he bore our sins, and carried our sorrows!" It flowed from his side, as "a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," when "he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," upon the cross!

3. And who is the physician to apply the healing balm? He who has prepared, applies it, even Christ, the good physician; who has carefully considered our case; who understands our disease; who has observed the workings of our malady; he skillfully and wisely applies the remedy! As the good Samaritan poured wine and oil into the wounds of the fainting traveller, so Christ pours the wine and oil of his compassion and mercy into the soul of the fainting penitent. When there is no help in ourselves, the Saviour can command us to "arise and walk;" his sovereign grace can heal our spiritual leprosy; his power can make us whole! The skill he possessed, in curing the most deadly disor-

ders of the body, furnishes a proof of his ability to remove the disorders of the soul; and this was the inference, which our Lord intended should be drawn, from the miracles he wrought; "for whether," he inquires, "is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) arise, and take up thy bed, and go unto thine house; and he arose, and departed to his house."[14]

4. But, in what manner, does the good Physician apply the healing balm? By the operation of his Holy Spirit, he applies it to the conscience of the transgressor—while he regulates the circumstances of the recovery of the patient, by infinite wisdom and love. The means he employs for this purpose are as various,

[14] Matt. ix. 5—7.

as the symptoms of the disorder are diversified.

1. Sometimes *disappointment* is sent to advance the cure. The worldly hopes of the patient are blasted; his earthly dependencies fail: the pillars of his high-raised expectations fall, and moulder in the dust; wherever he turns there is something which humbles his pride; whatever he pursues eludes his grasp; and, although it is the last lesson he is willing to learn, the conviction is at length reluctantly forced upon his mind, that all below is vain and transient, and delusive!

2. Sometimes, again, *family afflictions* are sent to hasten the recovery of the soul. The social bond is severed, and a child is taken away, to save the careless parent; or the parent is removed, to awaken the attention of the thoughtless child. The nuptial tie is dissolved, and the wife of his bosom is snatched

from the bereaved husband; or, the wife is made a widow! And severe as these dispensations may appear, they are needed to check the insidious progress of the malady; to overcome the paralyzing influence of the objects around us; and to remind us, that, in the Lord alone, is our strength aud refuge!

Jehovah acts towards his creatures as a wise and skilful physician, whose object is to effect a cure. Where the disorder will not yield to mild and gentle treatment, both the caustic and the knife must be employed, rather than endanger the life of the patient. Thus, while some are drawn to the Lord by the cords of his love, others, as it were, are saved as by fire! It may be required, to sever the right hand; or to pluck out the right eye; or to part from the objects most dear to the affections of our nature, before the spiritual cure can be wrought; before the ear

can be gained to the glad tidings of salvation; before the healing balm can find a passage to the soul!

3. But, the more ordinary mode of effecting the recovery of a sinner is, by the divine blessing upon the perusal of the sacred scriptures, and the preaching of the Gospel. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."[15] "Whosoever," says the apostle, "shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."[16] And then, in allusion to the privilege of possessing the means of grace ourselves, and to the paramount duty of extending them, to the utmost of our power, to those who are destitute of them, he adds, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed; and how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher; and how shall they preach

[15] Rom. x. 17. [16] Acts ii. 21.

except they be sent?" As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace; that bring glad tidings of good things."[17]

CONCLUSION.—1. Learn then, my brethren, to prize that blessed Gospel which is able to make wise unto salvation; listen to it with reverence, as "a message from God" to your souls! "If I be lifted up," said Christ, "I will draw all men after me." A simple and faithful exhibition of the Redeemer, in all his majesty and mercy; as waiting to be gracious, and willing to save; as suffering, that we might be free from suffering; as dying that we might live; is the line of address, which the duty of the minister suggests, and the necessities of the people require him to adopt. It is recorded, that when efforts were first made to evangelize Greenland, the individuals sent out for that purpose, em-

[17] 1 Rom. x. 14, 15.

ployed many arguments to convince the inhabitants of the country, of the existence of a God, and of the nature of his abstract perfections. Their laboured reasonings, however, made no impression upon the minds of this simple people; they "appeared as those that dreamed unto them." Ten whole years elapsed, and not a single convert was made to Christianity. At the end of this period, the missionaries discouraged, resolved to alter their plan: they left the principles of natural religion, and fully and freely exhibited, the compassion and love of the crucified Saviour. This new doctrine arrested the attention of the Greenlanders; touched the chord of their common sympathies; led them to inquire more about him, "who loved them, and gave himself for them," until multitudes flocked, from the remotest recesses of the northern ocean, to hear, and embrace the glad tidings of salvation!

2. We may contemplate the world then, as a great hospital, in which the old and young, the rich and poor, are as patients. The disease under which they labour is sin; the Physician who heals them is Christ; and the manner in which he conducts their cure is, that, to one he administers a cordial; another he humbles; a third he instructs; a fourth he strengthens: to all he gives his Gospel, as the grand prescription, that learning thence the nature of their malady, they may gratefully submit to the remedy.

3. Let the Christian examine himself by the marks of his remaining disease.—My brethren, what are your symptoms?

A want of appetite, for the grace and milk of the word of God, is a bad symptom; you should delight in it, and feed on it, with eagerness and joy.

If the food you receive, does not yield nourishment to your soul, it is a

bad symptom: you should grow thereby in faith, in hope, in charity.

If you are careless, and inactive, in the discharge of your duties, it is a bad symptom; you should zealously, and diligently labour while it is day, "because the night cometh when no man can work."[18]

4. Learn the importance of shunning the evil influence of the world. A sick man would not willingly place himself in an unwholesome atmosphere; neither must he, who is seeking a spiritual cure, breathe the pestilential atmosphere of the ungodly; which will obscure his faith; damp the ardour of his hope; and rob him of the brightness of his vision.

5. Learn, lastly, to adore the free and unmerited grace of God in the conversion of the soul. "Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver

[18] John ix. 4.

and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children; not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."[19]

[19] 1 Peter i. 13, 15, 18, 19.

## DISCOURSE V.

DANIEL IX. 9.

*To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him.*

IN this chapter, the prophet Daniel acknowledges the unworthiness, both of himself and the people, in the sight of God, and offers earnest supplications, on behalf of the rebellious and apostate Jews. And as the feelings of true penitence are the same in all ages, notwithstanding the endless variety of outward circumstances, we need not be surprised, that, the language of the prophet, while humbling himself before his

Maker, should closely resemble the language adopted by our church, to express the contrition and repentance of her members. The confession of Daniel is, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. O Lord, to us, belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee."[1] The confession of our church is, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep; we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts; we have offended against thy holy laws; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us!" The different clauses, which constitute this division of the confession, and

[1] Daniel ix. 5—8.

which contain an acknowledgment of our *proneness to wander;* of *our original and actual depravity;* and our *utter helplessness;* we have already considered, in their respective order. And, as a faithful historian will relate the miseries of war; the ravages of the pestilence; and the evils which arise from intestine commotion, as well as the smoother current of national prosperity; and as the faithful painter will represent the deformities of the visage, as well as the more agreeable features of the countenance; so, the ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God, if they would faithfully fulfil the dispensation committed to them, must exhibit man as the fall has left him, and as the scriptures and our church represent him, and not as the selfishness of pride, or the blindness of prejudice, would vainly desire to array him. And this, it has been my earnest endeavour, under the divine blessing, to accomplish, while

pursuing the various important topics which arose out of the first general division of the confession. We come now, to the second general division of this truly scriptural and comprehensive formulary, which contains sundry petitions for pardon and grace. The clauses to which I shall solicit your attention, on the present occasion, are those which follow. "But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders; spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults; restore thou them that are penitent!" And, that we may be encouraged to present these petitions, in the humble hope of receiving the blessing sought in answer to the prayer of faith, the text assures us, that, "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him."

In the clauses before us, then, are three distinct blessings pointed out, as the object of our petitions.

First, *Mercy is earnestly implored.*

SECONDLY, *Deliverance from the punishment of sin is invoked.*

THIRDLY, *Restoration to the favour of God is prayed for.*

And "O Lord, we beseech thee, favourably to hear the prayers of thy people, that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered, by thy goodness, through Jesus Christ our Saviour?"[2]

FIRST, then, *Mercy is earnestly implored.* "But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us miserable offenders."

1. By mercy, is meant, that Jehovah would exercise pity towards us; that he would have compassion upon our infirmities; that he would relieve our wretchedness, and bestow upon us pardoning grace and love. And well does a prayer for mercy become those, who acknowledge themselves so sinful and depraved. Misery is the fit object of mercy, and compassion is the attribute

[2] Collect for Septuagesima Sunday.

of God. Hence, remarks Bishop Horne, "The penitent's first ground for hope of pardon is his own misery, and the divine mercy which rejoiceth to relieve that misery. The riches, the power, and the glory of a kingdom, can neither prevent, nor remove, the torment of sin, which puts the monarch and the beggar upon a level. Every transgression leaves behind it a guilt, and a stain; the account between God and the sinner is crossed by the blood of the great propitiatory sacrifice, which removes the former, and the soul is cleansed by the Holy Spirit, which takes out the latter."

2. Mercy, then, is the balm which the sinner most needs; it is the cordial best adapted to heal the wounds of his soul; it is the only remedy against the just and endless punishment of sin. What would become of a ruined world, were not our God a God of mercy? Not one individual, from amongst the successive generations of mankind, would have

escaped the awful consequences of his guilt; not one would have been rescued from the jaws of the destroyer; not one would have been plucked as a brand from the burning; not one would have been reprieved from "the bitter pains of eternal death!"

"Let us suppose," observes the distinguished prelate above cited, "a sinner awakened to a true sense of his condition, and looking around him for help. Above is an angry God preparing to take vengeance; beneath is the fiery gulf ready to receive him; without him is a world in flames; within, the gnawing worm. Thus situated, he begins, in extreme agony of spirit, 'O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, for I am weak, O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed!'"[3]

3. But, let us attend to the character under which our church directs us to

[3] Psalm vi. 1 & 2.

implore mercy. "Have mercy upon us *miserable offenders!*" Sin has made us miserable; "the whole creation," says the apostle, "groaneth, and travaileth in pain together, until now." The just and natural wages of sin is death; "its end is destruction;" its reward is eternal torment. As none are free from the contamination of sin, so none are free from its bitter effects, and evil consequences. They are visible in our body, in the shape of pain, weakness, decay, death; they are visible in our souls, as has been shown at large in the preceding discourses, under the form of depraved affections—a perverted will—a blinded judgment—a slumbering conscience—a treacherous and deceitful heart. The fruit and effects of transgression may be every where traced; they are visible, and tangible, throughout all the relations and movements of life. The living marks of Jehovah's displeasure against sin, are equally found

in public and in private; amidst the splendour of the palace, and the poverty of the cottage. They may be recognized in the bereavement which afflicts the domestic circle, and in the calamity which plunges a nation into tears—they may be traced amidst the ravages of the pestilence, the fury of the hurricane, the desolation of the storm, the horrors of the sword and the flame—they may be seen, and felt, and tasted, and handled, wherever wretchedness has placed its foot, or misery has planted its thorn! Yes! my brethren, innumerable are the proofs, that sin has severed us from God, the fountain of happiness, and, by involving us in guilt, has plunged us into misery! "Hence," observes an eminent bishop of the last century, "the penitent intreats for mercy, by representing his pitiable case under the image of sickness. He describes his soul as deprived of all its health and vigour; as

languishing and fainting, by reason of sin, which had eat out the vitals, and shaken all the powers of the spiritual frame, so that the breath of life seemed to be departing. Enough, however, was left to supplicate the healing aid of the God of mercy and comfort; to petition for oil and wine at the hands of the physician of spirits."[4]

Bear in mind then, my brethren, that we are taught, by our confession, to implore mercy, as those who are altogether unworthy of the divine regard; who are destitute of all merit; and who have no plea to urge but their own extreme misery, and the Redeemer's boundless compassion. "But thou, O Lord! have mercy upon us miserable offenders!" Like the prodigal, we "perish with hunger;" and like him, we are taught to "arise and go to our Father, and say unto him, Father, we have sinned against heaven and before thee, and are

[4] Horne.

no more worthy to be called thy sons."[5] Or, like the condemned criminal, we cast ourselves upon the clemency of the sovereign, trusting, that, although our offences merit death, he will yet exercise his full and free prerogative, and, in his mercy, reprieve us from death. And what an unspeakable comfort is it to know, that we are not beyond the reach of mercy. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him!" The meek and lowly Saviour suffered and died, to open a fountain of mercy; he freely shed his precious blood to purchase it; and he is pledged, in his own immutable word, to dispense it to all who humbly and earnestly seek it. This is the foundation of the apostle's address to the Ephesians. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with

[5] Luke xv. 18, 19.

Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that, in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."[6]

But, SECONDLY, *deliverance from the punishment of sin is invoked,* in the clauses before us. "Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults!"

When it pleases God to pardon the guilt of sin, he will deliver the transgressor from its punishment; but where forgiveness of iniquity is not sought, through the atonement of the Saviour, that punishment will be as tremendous in its degree, as in its duration. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," was the voice of the law; but the milder voice

[6] Eph. ii. 5—9.

of the gospel, declares, that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."[7] And hence, our church, while she heartily acknowledges the original and actual depravity of her members, comes "boldly to the throne of grace," and solicits from him "who giveth liberally and upbraideth not," deliverance and pardon. "Spare thou them which confess their faults!"

I. We are here taught to pray for deliverance from the temporal evils which sin has inflicted upon the soul; from an accusing conscience; "a wounded spirit who can bear." From the loss of communion with God; "your iniquities," says the prophet, "have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."[8] We implore deliverance from the dread of divine

[7] 1 John i. 9. [8] Isaiah lix. 2.

wrath. A contemplation of the adorable Redeemer, in the garden of Gethsemane, will furnish an affecting spectacle of one sustaining the pressure of divine indignation. "Being in an agony he prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt!" If such were the effects of a sense of the divine displeasure, upon the almighty Son of the Highest, when "he bore our sins and carried our sorrows," what would they be upon us worms of the earth, whom the breath of Jehovah created, and whom the breath of the Omnipotent can destroy! Did the careless transgressor connect with this solemn spectacle, the end of his own impenitent career, he would be appalled at the rashness which has led him to contemn the anger of God; and could he be brought seriously to reflect upon the issue of his course, he would be

amazed at the presumption which permits him to remain, for a moment at ease, under the impending vengeance of Jehovah!

II. For exemption from the eternal evils of sin, we are taught especially to pray; from "the worm that dieth not, and from the fire that is not quenched;" from the pains of hell, and the jaws of the bottomless pit; from the abodes of outer darkness and despair, where "are weepings, and wailings, and gnashings of teeth!" All these our transgressions merit, and nothing but sovereign grace and mercy can save us from them! The righteous anger of Jehovah is deprecated, and exemption from the consequences of that anger implored, in the supplications of the Litany; "Spare us, good Lord; spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever." "From all evil and mischief;

from the crafts and assaults of the devil; from thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation, good Lord deliver us!"

For this twofold deliverance we pray, as those *who confess their faults*. Of the diversified and extensive character of these faults, we have treated at large in the preceding discourses. We have therein traced out the proofs of our departure from God—of our original corruption—of our actual transgressions—of our utter helplessness. To all these important doctrines, the confession directs our most serious attention; and the grand and humiliating truths connected with them, are distinctly admitted by those, who, in the language of this beautiful formulary, approach the throne of grace.

Bear in mind then, my brethren, what you acknowledge, when you seek pardon and deliverance at the hands of your heavenly Father; and remember,

with humility and self-abasement, the character in which you stand, when you raise the voice of supplication, and implore the forgiveness of your sins. As wanderers from the fold of the good Shepherd; as those who are in bondage to the corrupt devices and desires of their own hearts; as offenders against the holy law of God, by innumerable acts of omission and commission; as spiritually blind, and halt, and lame; as those in whom "there is no health;" in this character, and under these circumstances it is, that we are driven, by our necessities, to him, who alone can help and deliver us. And how consolatory is the truth made known in the text, that "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him!" Confiding, then, in the tender mercies of Jehovah; and encouraged by the assurance, that, "he pardoneth and absolveth all them

that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel," our church directs us, to pray, as I am,

THIRDLY, to notice, *For restoration to the favour of God.* "Restore thou them that are penitent!"

I. If we have seriously considered how mournfully we have fallen; how fearfully we have degenerated; how awfully we have apostatized; we shall be better prepared to understand, how great a change must be effected upon the soul, before it can be recovered. The spiritual transformation, to which Christ alluded, in his discourse with Nicodemus, must be wrought upon each one of us, before we can be restored to God. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit; marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born

again."[9] To this spiritual regeneration the evangelist St. John refers, in the first chapter of his gospel. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[10]

Contemplate an individual under the influence of a raging distemper, whose frame is languid—whose limbs are paralyzed—whose vigour and strength are gone. Such an one is an emblem of the transgressor in his natural state, with the faculties, and affections of the soul, impaired and paralyzed, by the influence of sin. Contemplate another individual recovering from his malady, whose exhausted frame is invigorated—whose enfeebled limbs are braced—and whose whole system exhibits the marks of returning health. Such an one is an em-

[9] John iii. 5—7. [10] John i. 12, 13.

blem of the transgressor in his renewed state, when the good Physician has applied the healing balm to the conscience; when the faculties, and affections of the soul, begin to be directed to their proper objects and pursuits; and when the members of the body, instead of continuing the ministers of sin, are made "instruments of righteousness." Let it be remembered, however, that as a man in weak health must avoid many things, which a man in strong health need not fear, so a young Christian, of weak faith, must be careful of venturing upon dangers, by which an established Christian, of strong faith, might possibly not be injured. And, let it also be borne in mind, that, as the firmest constitution, and the strongest health, are not proof against the dangers of an incautious, and unnecessary, exposure to an unwholesome atmosphere, neither is the Christian, under any circumstances,

proof against the unhallowed influence, and evil contagion, of the world. He must, therefore, "come out from amongst the workers of wickedness;" he must "touch not the unclean thing;" he must, at all times, "be sober, and watch unto prayer!"

II. Our church, very properly, makes penitence the first step in our recovery from the universal malady. "Restore thou them that are penitent!" Similar to this, was the prayer of David after his confession in Psalm 51st. "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit!" "True repentance," remarks Bishop Horne, "is founded upon the sense of our own wretchedness, and faith in the divine mercy. Without the former we should

never seek for pardon and grace; without the latter, we should despair of finding them."

As we present this clause of the confession then, my brethren, in the character of contrite offenders, how important is it, that we should rightly understand, what genuine contrition means. It requires that we bewail and lament our transgressions; that we behold iniquity with abhorrence, feeling, that it is "an evil, and a bitter thing to sin against God." But, that which we abhor we carefully shun; genuine contrition, therefore, requires, that we forsake the practice, and shun the appearance of iniquity; and if we have been taught to mourn over the secret influence of sin in the heart, and its visible fruits in the conduct, we shall earnestly long for deliverance from its power. How does the captive sigh after liberty; how does he long for the period, when his fetters shall be removed, and his chain shall be

broken! Nor less ardently does the soul, which the Holy Spirit has awakened to a sense of its guilt, and wretchedness, and danger, desire to be rescued from the captivity of Satan, and the miserable bondage of sin! And such are the emotions with which the petition before us should be uttered, "restore thou them that are penitent!" It is for each one of you to decide, whether such are the emotions with which you do present it. There is a rich tone of spiritual and experimental feeling, which may be traced throughout the offices of our church; and it would be well, if corresponding feelings were always excited, in the heart of those who are permitted to unite in them. The possession of a liturgy, at once so simple, so devotional, so scriptural; and so peculiarly adapted to the wants and necessities of our frail constitution, is a privilege, by which the members of the national church are distinguished, above other

communions of Christians; and well would it be, if our spiritual progress were commensurate with our spiritual privileges!

Conclusion.—As you approach Jehovah, then, from sabbath to sabbath, in the language of the Confession, let me urge you to examine, whether you bring with you, the dispositions, and desires, which are essential to the proper use of the Confession? 1. Do you indeed feel that you are "miserable offenders?" And here, permit me affectionately to inquire, if this be not the honest conviction of your mind, how you will answer to your Maker, for having so often addressed him in unmeaning language, and false profession? We are naturally disposed to shrink from the charge of hypocrisy, but if we try and examine ourselves upon this subject, by the light of holy scripture, will not many be convicted of this sin, who may, perhaps, regard hypocrisy as the last crime of

which they have been guilty? For, if he, who declares with his lips, in the language of our church, that he is a miserable, lost, and undone transgressor; while, in his heart, he considers himself righteous; estimates highly his own attainments; and imagines, that the merit of his services will challenge the regard of Jehovah; if he, whose inward feelings, thus contradict his outward professions, be not guilty of hypocrisy, *then* hypocrisy is nothing but a name, and the remonstrances of scripture, against the indulgence of this sin, are only empty sounds!!

2. Do you unreservedly "confess your faults?" "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall find mercy."[11] We may easily deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. No veil, no covering, will conceal us from him, "whose eyes are in every place,

[11] Prov. xxviii. 13.

beholding the evil and the good." For, as enquires the royal psalmist, "if we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched forth our hands to a strange God, shall not God search this out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart."[12]

3. Have you a penitent and contrite spirit? Often, perhaps, have you declared, under circumstances the most affecting, that "the remembrance of your sins is grievous, and the burden of them intolerable."[13] May the sincerity of your repentance preserve you from the responsibility of an insincere use of these solemn declarations!

4. But, while there is no mercy for any who do not feel their need of this healing balm, how encouraging, to the truly penitent, is the assurance of the text, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him." Yes, there

[12] Psalm xliv. 20, 21. [13] Communion Service.

is abundant mercy for all who humbly seek it; for the old, the young, the rich, the poor: for Greek and Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free. There is not one individual present beyond the reach of mercy; there is not one amongst us who is not invited to share the "unspeakable gift;" there is no wanderer from the fold, whom the Saviour will refuse to receive in the arms of his mercy, if, with a heart responding to the cry of his lips, he earnestly ask for mercy. "The spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!"[14]

[14] Rev. xxii. 27.

## DISCOURSE VI.

2 Corinthians, i. 20.

*For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*

We have already considered those clauses of our Confession, wherein is an acknowledgment of our general departure from God—of the entire depravity of the heart—of our actual transgressions—of our utter helplessness. And, in my last discourse, your attention was directed to the clauses in the second part of the Confession, wherein — mercy is implored — deli-

verance from the punishment of sin is invoked—and restoration to the favour of God is prayed for. We come now, to that part of our truly scriptural formulary, in which our church adopts the only plea of a sinner, when supplicating mercy at the hands of a gracious and Almighty God: "According to thy promises, declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord." And to transgressors, existing under the curse, and condemnation, of the law which they have broken, and justly deserving to feel the wrath and indignation, of their offended Maker, nothing can be so encouraging and consolatory, as the privilege of approaching a throne of grace, through a crucified Saviour; "for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

These words, and the clause of the Confession before us, will lead me to notice,

FIRST. *The foundation upon which*

*our hope of salvation rests;* "the promises of God."

SECONDLY. *The channel of their communication;* "in Christ Jesus our Lord."

THIRDLY. *The individual concern we have in them;* "they are declared unto mankind."

And, "O Lord God! who hast prepared for them that love thee, such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"[1]

I. Our hope of salvation then is *not* grounded upon our own deservings, or services, or works, or merits, since we are altogether destitute of merit.

Nothing is more foreign from the spirit and language of our church, than a desire to arrogate merit to lost and

[1] Collect for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

apostate man. Nothing can be more conclusive upon this subject than the terms employed in the 12th Article: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, *and not for our own works or deservings*." The works of the unrenewed man, instead of being acceptable to the purity of Jehovah, are expressly declared in the 13th Article, to "have the nature of sin." "Works done before the grace of God, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or deserve grace of congruity; yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

II. Our hope of salvation then, *is* grounded upon "the promises of God"—

"according to thy promises declared unto mankind, in Christ Jesus our Lord!"

No sooner had Adam fallen, and brought upon himself and his posterity "the wages of sin, which is death," than a promise was given, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." And to this were added, various other assurances of protection and favour, while his children continued to obey the law, and walk in the ordinances of God. The promises which, from time to time, were uttered by Jehovah, for the comfort and direction of his people, may be arranged under three classes. 1. Those of the patriarchal dispensation, which existed from the days of Adam, to the appointment of Moses, as the Jewish lawgiver, and embraced a period of 2,500 years. 2. Those of the Mosaic dispensation, which continued until the coming of Christ the Messiah, and embraced a

period of 1500 years. And, 3. Those of the gospel dispensation, which will continue in force, to support, comfort, and guide the church of the Redeemer, until the arrival of the blissful period, when "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!"[2] when "an end shall be made of transgression and sin," and death, the last enemy of man, shall be swallowed up in victory!

As the promises of the patriarchal and mosaic dispensations, chiefly pointed to the Messiah, and to blessings which would be consequent upon his coming into the world, we, who are privileged to live under the gospel dispensation, may be said to inherit the whole. For, the typical representations, and legal sacrifices, which were "shadows of good things to come," received their fulfilment in him, "who is the end of the

[2] Rev. xi. 15.

law for righteousness, to every one that believeth."[3] Hence, in allusion to the blessings of this last and best dispensation, when the truths of the gospel should be conveyed, with divine power, to the hearts of transgressors, Jesus is described by St. Luke, as rejoicing in spirit, and saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for, I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."[4]

The promises then, upon which we ground our hope of salvation, are full of

[3] Rom. x. 4. [4] Luke x. 21, 23, 24.

grace and mercy. Therein we may see "mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace embracing each other."[5] They remove our dependence from man, upon whom we are so prone to rest it, in order to fix it upon the Saviour, on whom it may be securely reposed. They point out the insufficiency of an arm of flesh, on which we are so prone to lean, and lead us to confide in him, "who created, and upholdeth all things, by the word of his power."

The promises of God are unbounded in their range; and what is highly consolatory, to such as sincerely adopt the Confession of our church, they are peculiarly addressed to humble and penitent souls. While "God resisteth the proud, he giveth grace to the humble." "For, thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with

[5] Psalm lxxxv. 10.

him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."[6]

When it pleases God to make a particular promise, he is bound not so much to the party interested in the promise, as to himself. And in this, our security consists, because the various attributes of Jehovah are pledged, for the performance of his word. Thus, in the 89th Psalm, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. I have sworn once by my holiness, that I will not fail David!" And hence, St. Paul reasons, when writing to the Hebrews: "When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swear by himself. For, men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show

[6] Isaiah lvii. 15.

unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation."[7]

I proceed then, SECONDLY, to notice *the channel, through which the promises of God are conveyed;* "in Christ Jesus." "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

I. They are the purchase of his death. By nature we are children of wrath, and heirs of perdition; by the blood and sufferings of Christ, we are made children of God, and heirs of the promises. Had not the Redeemer undertaken our cause; pitied us in our low estate; and veiled the glories of his Godhead in human form, that he might accomplish the marvellous work which his wisdom and grace suggested, we should have had no promise to encou-

[7] Heb. vi. 13, 16, 18.

rage; no assurance of pardon to cheer us! Had not the incarnate Son of God himself, averted the curse from us; paid the price of our release; satisfied the demands of justice on our behalf; dissipated the cloud of wrath suspended over us; and converted the frown of an avenging Judge, into the smile of an appeased and reconciled Father, the message of mercy would never have greeted our dwellings; the glad tidings of salvation would never have sounded in our ears! Had not the meek, the spotless Lamb of God, "borne our sins, and carried our sorrows;" had he not "trodden the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God;" had he not "drunk the bitter cup of suffering to the dregs, and wrung them out," the sentence of endless death, could never have been exchanged for the promise of life eternal; the doom to unutterable woe and torment, could never have been reversed for the promise of peace, and

joy, and happiness, and a "crown of righteousness which fadeth not away!"

II. While the great and precious promises of the gospel are purchased by Christ, they are also revealed through him. It is he who "has brought life and immortality to light," in the revelation of his will to man. "For the law," says the Evangelist, "was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Redeemer stands, in relation to his church, in the threefold character of "prophet, priest, and king." He is the Alpha and Omega of its hopes; the Alpha and Omega of its blessings.

He invites sinners to apply to him, in the hour of necessity, that they may prove his ability and willingness to help them. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for

your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."[8]

He reveals himself as the only food, to nourish and invigorate an immortal spirit. "I am the bread of life." "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give, is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."[9]

He enforces the necessity of spiritual union with him, under the emblem of a vine. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing."[10]

He bewails the folly of those who proudly, or carelessly, reject him. "O

[8] Matt. xi. 28—30. [9] John vi. 48—51.
[10] John xv. 4, 5.

Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! behold your house is left unto you desolate."[11]

III. The promises of the gospel are, moreover, interceded for by Christ, on behalf of his church.

Prior to his ascension, the Redeemer taught his disciples to expect the Holy Spirit, as their comforter and guide, throughout the various conflicts and difficulties, which might lie in their road to the heavenly inheritance. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not

[11] Matt. xxiii. 37.

leave you comfortless, I will come to you."[12]

St. Paul refers to the character of Christ, as the intercessor of the church, as a proof of his power to confer salvation. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them."[13] "He enters into the holy place, bearing his own blood;" he pleads his own sufferings; urges the virtue of his own merits; and claims as his own, those whom he has ransomed, "by his cross and passion; by his agony and bloody sweat!" And the result of this prevailing intercession is, that, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will, with him also, freely give us all things.[14]

IV. In Christ, as the great head and representative of the church, the pro-

[12] John xiv. 16, 18. [13] Heb. vii. 25.
[14] Rom viii. 32.

mises are immutably secured. They are indeed, not so much made to the creature, as to the Saviour. We are the parties interested in them, while they are the property of the Redeemer, held, as it were, in trust, for our benefit; we are the captives liberated, but his is the hand which has burst our fetters; we are the criminals pardoned, but the act of grace is his; we are the patients healed, but he is the skilful physician: for, it is he who "binds up the broken-hearted, and proclaims liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."[15]

V. The glory of the Redeemer requires the faithful fulfilment of the promises. They are his by purchase, and by possession; they are his with the full consent of the Father; they are his, in right of his Godhead, as the great Lord of all. "He shall, therefore, see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."[16]

[15] Isaiah lxi. 1. [16] Isaiah liii. 11.

He shall "make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God,"[17]—"he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end,"—"for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, amen, unto the glory of God by us."

The THIRD topic for our notice is, *the individual concern we have in them.* These gracious and glorious promises are "declared unto mankind." "According to thy promises, declared unto mankind, in Christ Jesu our Lord."

1. They are not conveyed in doubtful terms, but in plain and striking language,—they are so prominent in every page of divine revelation, that "he that runs may read them,"—they are written, as it were, with a sunbeam,—they shine as a bright constellation, and illumine

[17] Isaiah lii. 10.

the sacred volume, with a dazzling display of divine compassion and mercy!

2. They are declared, not to apostate angels, but to rebellious man; "for verily Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."[18] In reference to the stupendous plan of wisdom and love, which Jehovah devised and accomplished, for the recovery of a lost world, well might he declare, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."[19]

3. The gracious promises of the gospel "are declared," not to one nation or age—not to one sect or party—not to one class or station, but to all: to the enlightened European, to the barbarous African—

[18] Heb. ii. 16. [19] Isaiah lv. 8, 9.

to the superstitious Hindoo, to the North American savage—to the degraded Esquimaux, to the ferocious New Zealander—to the Cingalese and the Tartar—to the dwellers in the isles, and the wanderers in the desert—to all, of whatever language, or habit, or climate, or colour, in whom the pulse of our common humanity beats, is the gospel invitation addressed; and the message it conveys, to the diversified tribes of the universal family of man, is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye buy and eat, yea come buy wine and milk, without money and without price!"[19] Of the extensive range of the Redeemer's spiritual dominion, Jehovah has said, by the mouth of his prophet: "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles,

[19] Isaiah lv. 1.

that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."[20]

4. The promises of God are, moreover, "declared" as containing an antidote for every trial and temptation incident to man. There is no case so desperate as to exclude the Christian from the consolation of some appropriate promise. Do afflictions press heavily upon him?—do doubts, like a cloud, darken his path?—do waves of trouble roll over his head?—do difficulties, like a labyrinth, encompass his steps?—does sickness assail him?—does death stare him in the face?—under each, and all of these trials, the promises are his strong hold. They will be as balm to his bleeding wounds—they will raise his drooping head—confirm his feeble knees—revive his fainting spirit. They will be as the supporting staff to the pilgrim—as the cheering beacon to the mariner—as the resting-stone to the way-worn traveller—as tidings of

[20] Isaiah xlix. 6.

a reprieve to the criminal—as the voice of a deliverer to the captive—as the rising of the day star to the midnight wanderer! For, says Jehovah, "when the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."[21]

Con. 1. If such, then, be the nature and value of the promises, how important is the study of the sacred volume which contains them! The productions of those who write, as they are moved by their fancy, their interest, or their passions, find a ready access to the attention of the multitude; but the productions of the prophets, and apostles, and evangelists, who "wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," are too often treated

[21] Isaiah xli. 17, 18.

as a dead letter, or else are regarded as curious records, venerable indeed for their antiquity, but adapted neither to ordinary times, nor ordinary use. But, my brethren, if you value your true happiness—if you prize the welfare of your souls—if you would acquire the wisdom which is better than rubies—if you would inherit the incorruptible treasure—if you would find "the pearl of great price," be persuaded to "search the scriptures," for in them are contained "the words of eternal life!"

2. Peculiar care must be observed in the right application of the promises. An erroneous application of them is replete with danger. Food, which is good in itself, may act as poison upon certain constitutions. Its proper use is to nourish, not to inflame—to strengthen for action, not to encourage idleness and sloth. Thus, the promises of God are intended to nourish the soul in duty—to nerve its faculties, and direct its ener-

gies—and not to foster self-dependence, nor minister to pride. We should not offer stimulating cordials to a patient in a fever, neither must we apply the cordials of the gospel, which are designed to encourage the humble, and comfort the penitent, to those, whose cheek has never been moistened by the tear of contrition, and who have never heartily mourned over the burden of their guilt. The transgressor must have his wounds probed—his high imaginations brought low—his stubborn will subdued—his vagrant desires repressed — and himself prostrated in the dust before the cross of his Saviour, that *then* the arms of his mercy may be extended towards him, and the hand of his pity lift him up. Yes, my brethren, there are many cases which require the application of the caustic and the knife, before the healing balm can be safely poured into the wounds of the soul; and although the selfishness of our nature would more

readily receive the stimulating cordial, than submit to the scourge, the ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God must beware, how they incur the charge of "healing the hurt of the daughter of the people slightly, saying peace, peace, when alas! there is no peace!"[22]

3. In order to derive benefit from the subject we have considered, we must implore the gift of faith. This is the only principle whereby the Christian can feed upon the promises. Faith, in the spiritual system, is, what the digestive organ is in the natural. It receives the promises—applies them to their proper use—distributes them into their various appropriate channels—extracts from them the nourishment they are intended to supply—and derives the strength, consolation, and support, which the Christian pilgrim so constantly needs, and which the promises so abundantly bestow. In addition, then, to contrition of

[22] Jerem. viii. 11.

mind, we must seek a child-like faith; a holy reliance upon the word of God in opposition to the maxims of the world; a simple and passive submission, at all times, to the will of our heavenly Father. "Faith," it has well been remarked, "is the easiest thing in the world, but the most difficult to be exercised." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," is the command of Christ, but, alas! man is prone to look every where but where he ought to look. He directs his eyes to "the hills and the mountains," to earthen cisterns, to broken reeds, to himself, to the world, to every other object rather than to God!

4. If we value the promises, we must, lastly, aim, in all that we do, to promote the divine glory. The whole plan of providence and grace, pursues this as its grand end. "All the promises of God in Christ, are yea, and in him amen, to

the glory of God, by us." They magnify his power, exalt his love, proclaim his mercy, make known his goodness, extol his holiness and truth. But, if you have been enabled to rejoice in the promises yourselves, seek to make them known to others. Many are perishing for lack of knowledge, while we have bread and to spare! It is an awful thought, that, every passing second witnesses the flight of a disembodied spirit from this lower world, into the boundless ocean of eternity!—that, during the period occupied in this service, upwards of 5000 of the common family of man, have probably exchanged the shadows of the present, for the realities of the future—and have been severed from the objects, which engrossed their hopes, and fears, and joys, and sorrows, for a few fleeting moments, to enter upon that fixed and interminable scene, which will absorb and occupy the soul for ever!

And, what infinitely augments the solemnity of the reflection, is—that, by far the larger portion of these have never heard of those gracious promises, which are so freely declared to us; have never heard of the Almighty Saviour, to whom we are invited to flee; have never listened to those good tidings of great joy, which would "gladden the solitary places, and make the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose!" While you care, then, for your own souls, care for the souls of others; while you "make your own calling and election sure," seek to bring your children, your relatives, your friends, and the whole family of man, to Jesus. And, as Christian charity resembles the expanding circle, which embraces the whole earth in its ample circumference, so let your efforts be mingled with your prayers, that the Lord would "have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and con-

tempt of his word, and so fetch them home to his flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord!"

## DISCOURSE VII.

PHILIPPIANS i. 11.

*Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.*

IN the verses preceding the text, St. Paul expresses his gratitude to God on behalf of the saints at Philippi; makes known his lively concern for their spiritual welfare, and then prays for their advancement in divine grace and knowledge. "For God is my record," he remarks, in the 8th and following verses, "how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ; and this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and

more, in knowledge and in all judgment that ye may approve things that are excellent: that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;" adding, in the language of the text, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." These words, which form the conclusion of the apostle's prayer, are very analagous to the concluding clauses of the Confession, which I am now to consider, in terminating my discourses, upon that truly spiritual and edifying part of our Liturgy. "And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen."

There are *three points* in these clauses, which are particularly worthy of notice.

First, *The plea which our church teaches her members to urge, in their addresses to God.*

SECONDLY. *The practical aim of our prayers.*

And THIRDLY. *The grand end of our desires, petitions, walk, and conversation.*

And we pray thee, O Lord, to "mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen us by thy grace, that by the uprightness of our lives, and the constancy of our faith, we may glorify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord."[1]

FIRST, then, let us notice, *the plea which our church teaches us to urge, in our addresses to God.* "And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake." In my last lecture, your attention was directed to the blessed Saviour, as the substance of the promises made to mankind, from the earliest ages of the world. "For, all the promises of God in him, are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."[2] Our confidence, as

[1] Vide Collect for Innocents' Day.

[2] 2 Cor. i. 20.

sinners, is grounded upon the assurances of grace and pardon, which are made to us through the crucified Redeemer. Were the promises removed from the sacred page, the inspired volume, both as it regards the encouragement, and support, of the transgressor in the present life, and his prospects of happiness hereafter, would become a blank. To subtract the promises from the Bible, would be like subtracting the sun from the firmament. If the luminary of day were withdrawn—instead of the cheering light and genial heat, which animate and fructify the face of nature, the prospect would be dreary, and cold, and dark, and all nature would languish, and decay. And, if the gracious assurances of Jehovah's compassion and mercy were withdrawn from our reach, the hopes of the Christian would wither, his joys would fade, his zeal would grow cold, his energies would be enfeebled, his whole course of being would be pa-

ralized, disordered, deranged. But, we thank God, that these exhaustless treasures of the believer are grounded upon an immovable basis; they are ratified by the truth, and secured by the power of the unchangeable Jehovah!

These invaluable pledges of divine love, however, are given to us only in Christ Jesus; in virtue of our union with him by faith, as our covenant head. We have, therefore, no other basis, upon which to erect our plea for any one of the numerous spiritual blessings we need, than the atonement, the merits, the righteousness, the intercession of Christ. Hence, every boon, which the confession teaches us to supplicate, must be sought in the name of the adorable Redeemer. The mercy we implore, the deliverance we pray for, the restoration we seek, are each, and all, to be solicited "according to the promises declared unto mankind, in Christ Jesus our Lord." And, "for his sake," too,

must we supplicate an enlarged measure of grace and strength from above, which will be essentially necessary to effect that, which I am SECONDLY to consider, *the practical aim of our prayers.* "That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life."

The various branches of practical Christianity are referred to by St. Paul, in his epistle to Titus, in expressions similar to these. Having remarked, that "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men," he adds, "teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."[3] This is a concise, but comprehensive epitome of our duty to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves; and it is, therefore, judiciously adopted by our church in this branch of her admirable Liturgy. It requires that humility, forbearance, and Christian

[3] Titus ii. 11, 12.

moderation, should be conspicuous in our personal conduct; that equity and truth, compassion and kindness, should regulate our intercourse with others; while meekness and reverence, a child-like submission, a hallowed zeal, a grateful dependence, a simple, tender, and affectionate spirit, should characterize our piety towards God. The effect of the fall is, that we live a life of ungodliness and intemperance; the effect of the recovery is—that, by the grace of God preventing us, and by the spirit of God assisting us, we live a new life; evil lusts are crucified, the body of sin is mortified, "old things pass away, behold all things become new;" or, as the Confession expresses it, "a godly, righteous, and sober life," is the thing to be produced.

It will have appeared, from the preceding discourses,—

1. How far, alas! the Lord God is from the thoughts of the unregenerate

man! How little Jehovah is the object upon which his contemplations rest! How rarely a passing reflection occurs, which presents the Supreme Being to his mind, in a manner worthy of his exalted majesty, and consistent with his divine perfections. It will also have appeared,

2. How contrary to the strict tenor of the law is the practice of the unregenerate man. For, let him only try his conduct by the righteous test of God's holy word, and he will see how fearfully he fails, in his attention to the most positive commands, in his obedience to the clearest precepts, in his discharge of the plainest duties.

3. But how opposed, too, to the humiliating doctrines of the gospel, are his principles! How erroneous are his views of his own character; how false his estimate of the world; how low his standard of moral rectitude and Christian duty; how inadequate and debasing

his notions of Him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."

4. How selfish and headstrong, moreover—how immoderate and perverse are his desires. The natural man is ready to sacrifice every thing for present gratification; he would barter heaven for the possessions or enjoyments of an hour; he would brave the torments of the bottomless pit, for the accomplishment of that which his deluded heart delights in! But, how great is the change which the grace of God effects upon the unregenerate man; how striking is the alteration in his principles and habits; how decisive is the evidence of the divine work, upon his whole temper and conduct! The pride of the heart is humbled; the lofty spirit is abased; the profane man becomes devout; the careless man grows attentive to the one thing needful; the churl devises liberal things; the impetuosity of the lion is transformed into the meekness of the lamb!

Contrast the character of the persecuting Saul, with that of the converted, enlightened, humbled Paul, and you will trace, even in one who was moral, and exemplary, and devout, according to the law, the transforming power of divine and sovereign grace. The unconverted Saul "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord Jesus;" the converted Paul "became all things to all men, that he might win, and bring back some wanderers to the fold of Christ."[4] The former "made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison."[5] The latter cheerfully endured perils by land, and perils by water: counted "all things but dross, that he might win Christ;" "yea, was ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." The spiritual effects which will result from the more general

[4] Acts ix. 1. [5] Acts viii. 3.

operation of divine grace upon the hearts of transgressors; and the universal harmony and happiness it will shed around it, are referred to in the beautiful figurative description of the prophet Isaiah. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."[6] "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for, in the wilderness shall the waters break out, and streams in the desert."[7]

Be it your aim then, my brethren, "to live a godly, righteous, and sober life."

[6] Isaiah xxxv. 1—2. [7] Ibid. xxxv. 5, 6.

This is alone the path of safety, and the road to happiness; for, "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."[8] This too is the only path to life eternal: "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; but strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it;"[9] or, in other words, there are ten thousand roads, which issue in everlasting destruction, while only one points the way to happiness and heaven! The careless person and the formalist; the swearer and the drunkard; the sabbath-breaker, and the dishonest; the unclean person, the scoffer, the infidel, the hypocrite, are pursuing each a different walk, in the mazes and labyrinths of iniquity; but they all terminate in the same manner; they all converge to the same point; they all issue in the

[8] Prov. iii. 17. [9] Matt. vii. 13, 14.

same end, and that end is destruction: that end is woe, and misery, and death!

The Christian path of "a godly, righteous, and sober life," is sometimes, it is true, an arduous, and a rugged one; but it must be trodden by all who would flee from the wrath to come; by all who would avoid the "worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.[9] There are many hindrances and impediments, which the Christian encounters, and which the scriptures teach him to expect in his pilgrimage; but, on the other hand, there are many assistances and encouragements, to solace and cheer him in the way. One great hindrance and impediment is,—

A corrupt heart, entangling us in its evil devices, and unhallowed desires: acting the part of a traitor within; and ever ready to give possession of the citadel to the enemy. Another is an ensnaring and deceitful world, at-

[9] Mark ix. 44.

tracting us by its smiles, and alarming us by its frowns; to-day, exciting our hopes—to-morrow, acting upon our fears: at one moment impelling us on to what is wrong; at another, drawing us off from what is right. And a third is, our subtle and powerful adversary, the devil, who is described as a lion, in search of his prey; who is ever ready to assail us in our weak points, and to commence his attack, when, and where, we least expect it. One heedless movement—one imprudent step—one unguarded measure, may open the way for him to harass, and perplex, and endanger our course! These, then, are the formidable hindrances, which impede the rapid progress of the Christian; these are the powerful foes, which have usurped, and strive to exercise dominion over us; these are the subtle enemies, against the influence of which, we must ever watch and pray. That we should "renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps

and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh," is solemnly promised, by our sponsors, in our baptism; and that, as valiant soldiers of the Lord Jesus, we should oppose this triple league, and resist this unhallowed confederacy, is as solemnly stipulated, in the same solemn service, when the priest is directed to say, "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of the crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." Neither are we left to contend in our own strength, nor to rely upon our own arm, for while there are powerful adversaries against us, there are powerful auxiliaries on our side.

1. The support of divine grace is ours. The apostle of the Gentiles felt the weight

of the Christian conflict, and prayed for deliverance from the arduous struggle, but what was the answer he received? "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."[10]

2. The presence of the Holy Spirit is as a shield and buckler to the Christian warrior. "Lo, I am with you alway, said Christ to his disciples, even to the end of the world;" and, therefore, the sincere follower of the Saviour, amidst all the difficulties and anxieties which harass his course, may say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?—the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" [11]

3. The promises of God, too, are arrayed on his side. "Fear not, says Jehovah, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee;

[10] 2 Cor. xii. 9. [11] Psalm xxvii. 1.

when thou passest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."[12] "Greater then is he that is for us, than all who are against us,"—for, "the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge."

The THIRD point to be noticed, is, *the grand end of our desires, petitions, walk, and conversation.* "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Or, as the Confession expresses it, "And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen."

"Amen" is one of the few words which have been constantly retained, without translation, into the language of the country, by all Christian churches, to the present day. It is a term of

[12] Isaiah xliii. 1, 2.

Hebrew origin, and denotes truth, certainty, stability, fidelity. When addressed to God, it is employed as a petition, and signifies, "so be it," or, "be it as thou hast said;" when addressed to man, it is used as a strong affirmation, and is translated, "verily, verily." In this latter sense it often precedes the declarations of our Lord, to his disciples and the multitudes. At the conclusion of the Confession, and throughout our liturgical service, it is generally employed in the former sense, as a prayer to Jehovah. A learned writer has thus paraphrased it. "Confirm to us, O Lord, realize, and verify, all the blessings and benefits that we have prayed for!"[13]

The grand end of human existence, is, that, as "we are not our own, but are bought with a price, we should therefore glorify God, in our body, and in our spirit, which are God's."[14]

1. The attention of the Saviour was

[13] Shepherd. [14] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

uniformly directed to this object. Throughout his life of patient self-denial and laborious charity; in his ministry, in his sufferings, in his death, this was the constraining and pervading motive of his conduct. His "meat and drink were to do the will of his heavenly Father;" hence, as the hour of his departure was at hand, he could say, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."[15] And hence, at the close of the last affecting scene, in the history of the meek and lowly Saviour, he could look back from the cross, upon his career of obedience and mercy, and repeat the exclamation, "it is finished," when "he bowed his head and gave up the ghost!"[16]

2. How desirous, too, are the angelic hosts to advance the divine glory! "Angels are ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salva-

[15] John xvii. 4. [16] John xix. 30.

tion." The divine honour was promoted by the stupendous work of Christ for the redemption of man; and hence, at the birth of the Saviour, the song of the multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward man." The recovery of lost transgressors glorifies the grace of God; hence, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."[17] The justice of God is glorified in the punishment of impenitent offenders; hence, "the angel of the Lord smote the wicked Herod, because he gave not God the glory."[18]

3. The same hallowed desire to glorify the great Jehovah, which pervaded the mind of Christ, and which rouses the ardour of the angelic spirits, also nerved the efforts of the holy apostles. It led them to carry the glad tidings of salvation into the remotest corners of

[17] Luke xv. 10. [18] Acts xii. 23.

the earth; neither "counted they their life dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and testify the gospel of the grace of God."[19] And it was while they were zealously employed in giving effect to the last command of their Lord, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" that St. Andrew was crucified in Greece; St. Matthew was slain in Ethiopia; St. Thomas was pierced with lances by the Bramins of India; and, if the early records of our island can be accredited, Simon Zelotes was crucified in Britain.

4. Nor were the primitive Christians insensible to the paramount duty of consecrating every gift to the service of the divine Giver. They "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonments; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the

[19] Acts xx. 24.

sword; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth," and they glorified God in the deeps of their tribulation![20]

5. But, is the history of our own country destitute of examples of the same holy zeal, in the same hallowed cause? We can point to Cranmer, and Hooper, and Latimer, and Ridley, as the leaders of a noble army of British martyrs, who glorified God, by sealing the truth, as it is in Jesus, with their blood. Neither did he whose honour they were thereby conspicuously promoting, leave them comfortless in their last extremity. "Be of good heart, brother," said Ridley to Latimer, as they were standing together at the stake, "for God will either assuage the fury of the flames, or else strengthen us to abide it!" And when the fire was kindled around the former, the venerable Latimer encouraged him in his turn, with, "Be of good comfort,

[20] Heb. xi. 37, 38.

master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out!"

All have not strength of faith sufficient to wear the crown of martyrdom, neither are all the disciples of Christ thus called upon to glorify their Saviour. In our own peaceful, and privileged era, in which the bounds of civil and religious liberty are more accurately defined; in which the rights of the subject are protected, and liberty of conscience is fully secured, none need fear, that the sincerity of their attachment to the cause of their crucified Lord, will be submitted to the test of the torture, or the dungeon, or the sword. But, because protected by a wise and enlightened government, and living in the bosom of an apostolic church, we are not called upon to glorify God, by enduring bonds, or imprisonment, or death, are we therefore exonerated from

the high and hallowed duty, are we therefore deprived of the high and hallowed privilege, of advancing the divine glory in another way? Whatever be our rank, and whatever be our station, we are called upon, agreeably to the language of our church, to "live a godly, righteous, and sober life, *to the glory of his holy name;*" we are called upon, agreeably to the injunction of the apostle, to "be filled with the fruits of righteousness, *unto the glory and praise of God.*" We are called upon, as stewards of all we possess, *to glorify the Lord with our talents;* to employ our time, and direct our influence, for the advancement of his cause; to make an offering of our property, and acquirements, upon his sacred altar; to "spend, and be spent" in his service; to consecrate all that we have, and are, to his honour and praise.

"He that winneth souls is wise," and they who have been taught to seek the

salvation of their own souls, will be the foremost to labour and pray for the spiritual salvation of others. It was a contemplation of the unspeakable value of an immortal soul, and of the glory accruing to divine grace by the conversion of one trangressor "from the error of his ways, to the wisdom of the just," that led Archbishop Willyams, towards the close of his life, to remark, "I have passed through many places of honour and trust, both in church and state, these seventy years; yet, were I assured, that, by my preaching, I had converted but one soul to God, I should take therein more spiritual joy and comfort, than in all the honours and offices which have been heaped upon me."

Go then, my beloved Christian brethren, and commence the hallowed duty; go, and enjoy the high-born privilege of glorifying God! By submission in suffering—by patience in affliction—by diligence in action—by watchful-

ness — by prayer — by self-denial — by meekness—by charity—by abounding in "all that is lovely, and of good report," *strive to glorify God!*

And let your earnest supplications be united with mine, that the lectures, which are now brought to a close, may, through the divine blessing, be rendered subservient to the same grand purpose. May they promote within us a spirit of deeper humility—of more lively faith—of more ardent charity! May they encourage us to rely more simply upon Christ, the good Shepherd; and may they lead us to seek larger measures of the influence of the Holy Spirit, to "strengthen, establish, settle us," in sound doctrine, and to build us up, and preserve us, "in all holy conversation and godliness!"

Whatever, then, hath been delivered in these discourses, agreeably to his will, may the Lord graciously accept and bless; whatever hath been uttered dis-

pleasing in his sight, may he mercifully pardon and forgive; "that in this, and all our works, begun, continued, and ended in him, we may glorify God!" "Therefore, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory; glory be to thee, O Lord most High!" [21]

[21] Communion Service.

THE END.

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